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Atheist







THE  
ATHEIST CONFUTED:  
TOGETHER WITH  
*AN ESSAY ON ETERNITY,*  
AND  
ADVANTAGEOUS THOUGHTS,  
ON THE  
DUTY OF MAN.

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Job xxviii. 28.

*And unto man he said, Behold the fear of the Lord,  
that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding*

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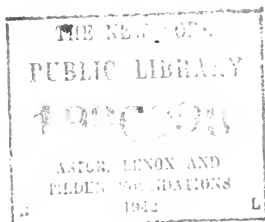
PHILADELPHIA :  
PRINTED FOR THE PUBLISHER,  
BY THOMAS T. STILES,

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1806.

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1. Christianity - Essays  
and misc.

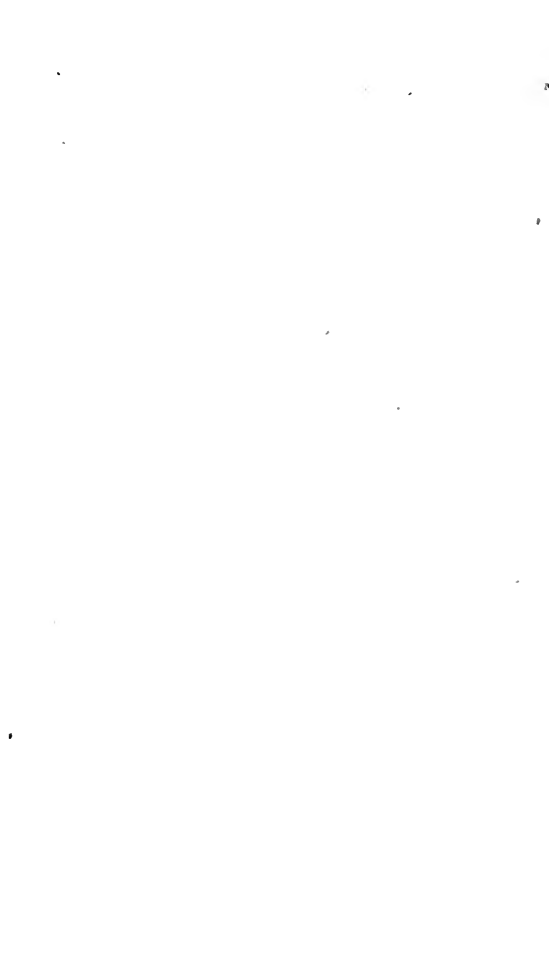




## PREFACE.

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THE publisher has been induced to offer this work to the public, in consequence of much solicitation : he also viewing the subject as being in its own nature the most interesting, and calculated for extensive usefulness : taking into consideration the probability of its falling into the hands of some, where fancy might lead to a perusal of the work, and thereby some be reclaimed from error. The publisher would be much pleased if he was certain of the author ; but that being not easily obtained, it is hoped the public will not neglect so excellent a work in consequence of not knowing the author, which is not of so much importance, as the merit of the work. The principle he wishes to encourage, is enquiry and examination for our own safety, to find the truth of assertions, keeping in view that evidence that leads to establish facts. If so, we may receive with pleasure and profit, the contents of this work, that has so long been in obscurity, but is now revived, I trust, to the joy and comfort of many.



A LETTER OF  
RECOMMENDATION  
TO THE EDITOR.

DEAR SIR,

*AS the sudden and permanent change which is sometimes affected in men, by the grace of God, in reading well authenticated tracts, which tend to free the mind from infidelity, and raise in pious minds, sentiments of love and gratitude, to the giver of every good and perfect gift, for so great a salvation. I am induced under these considerations, to present you a Book entitled "the Atheist Confuted, together with an essay on Eternity." I have perused the work with singular pleasure, and hesitate not to say, that it is in my opinion, at least an invaluable compilation, and cannot but hope that a book, whose contents do such credit to the title, if offered for a re-publication, will meet a generous patronage. After having read the work, and impartially examined and weighed the arguments brought forward on both sides of the question, I can with the*

strictest propriety pronounce it, one of the best productions of human eloquence and argumentation, that I have ever read, and worthy the attention of every intelligent person; being calculated (in my humble opinion) to establish the authenticity of Divine Revelation, and to justify the ways of God with man.

Being persuaded this work is scarce, I am compelled to solicit your undertaking it, expecting you will embrace the earliest opportunity of diffusing knowledge of the greatest importance. Should the patronage equal my wishes, you will have no reason to regret your printing "the Atheist Confuted, with an Essay on Eternity, and the Duty of man."

I am with respect Sir,  
your humble Servant,

## ATHEIST CONFUTED.



IF thou affirmest there is no God, tell me what it is that supports this mighty fabric of the Universe, where thou livest, movest, and hast thy being? shew me the reason of the ebbing and flowing of the vast ocean, or what it is that keeps its boisterous waves within their due bounds? let me know why the moon should have a greater influence on the waters, and human bodies, than that glorious luminary, which shines by day, or those millions of stars that appear by night? tell me who it was that created the first man, or by whose power he came to breath; if thou sayest he sprung out of the earth by nature, why does not that

nature produce more of the same kind, without the mutual correspondence of different sexes? Otherwise, bring me but one solid argument to prove, that it is nature and nothing else, which makes such a visible distinction in every face, though we are all apparently made of the same shape and form. Was it nature that prompted Baynam the martyr, when he declared at the stake to the multitude of spectators, "That he felt no more pain in the flames than in a bed of down," nay, added he "it is as sweet to me as a bed of roses?" Was it nature that excited bishop Ferrer to tell the people, before he went to the place of execution to this effect, "If I stir in the fire, believe not my Doctrine," and accordingly he remained fixed and unmoved in the midst of all his tortures.

Now I peremptorily challenge thee, O daring Atheist, to bring me one single instance, that an unbeliever did at any time convince the world by a mir-

acle, that **there** is no **God**? Nay, thou art altogether ignorant of the productions of natural causes. Can'st thou make it appear, by what means the soul is infused into a human body, how it exercises its several faculties in those secret recesses, or how it operates on the animal spirit? Nay, can'st thou give an account of the vegetation of plants, or show how the grass grows under thy feet? But farther, if there be no such supreme and omnipotent being, how comes it to pass, that the most part, if not all those of your profession, are in so great a consternation, when they come within the prospect of eternity? Are you wiser than all the rest of mankind in the time of your health, and such fools when ye come to dye, as to discover so many signs of fear, horror and amazement? One of the greatest proficient in that sort of mad learning, could not forbear owning at last, "that when reason was against a man, then a man will be a-

gainst reason:" another classic author in the school of Atheism, when he lay on his death bed, cried out for a light and a guard to watch with him, lest the devil should tear him to pieces : another eminent Athiest being just ready to expire, one asked him what he now thought of God ? Whereupon he replied, " I am altogether in the dark ;" and it is also reported, that Hobbes, that famous Leviathan of Malmesbury, drawing near his end, let fall the like expression, saying, " now I am about to fetch a leap in the dark."

Besides these persons, I could name the earls of Rochester and Pembroke with many others, who before their death, were filled with amazement at the thoughts of their infidelity and unaccountable course of life ; but I shall forbear, and proceed to what I chiefly design to treat of on this important subject. I had the happiness to be acquainted with a person of admirable endowments, whose great misfortune



it was to be tainted with Atheistical principles, which occasioned many disputes between us ; so that I think myself obliged in several respects, to give the reader an account of the principal arguments that were produced on those occasions : he asked me, “ what I meant by owning a God ? ” I answered, “ it was one main article of the christian faith, and that if he pleased I would tell him more particularly, what God was. “ What,” said he, “ are you wiser than Simonides, who being asked by Hero, king of Sicily, who God was ? he demanded a whole day to consider of it ; which being expired, he desired two days more, to take the matter into farther consideration : after the expiration of which, he still requested three other days, and at last had no other answer to return to the king, but this, “ The more he mused upon it, the more he might ; for the farther he busied himself in searching into this matter, the farther he still was from finding it

out:" Again Plato argued in like manner concerning the Deity, saying, "What God is, I know not!" "No doubt," urged my friend, "but these men were more refined in their opinions, had better experience in the knowledge of a God, than you can pretend to."

My reply to the gentleman, was to this effect, "That the citing of those two authors would avail him nothing, and that he took them both in the wrong sense; for they never disowned the being of a supreme power, but acknowledged, they were not capable of comprehending or defining what God was, much less of representing him to the eye of human reason;" "for," says Plato "What he is not, that I know:" but my design is, to show what God is: then I affirm him to be a spirit infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his essence, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, and truth: nevertheless this great God, that I am

now discoursing of, condescends so far as to take cognizance of all the actions of the human creatures, and has revealed his mind to mankind ; he is a glorious God full of perfection and blessedness ; he is all-sufficient in himself, without any measure, bounds, or limits : he fills heaven and earth with his power and majesty : he is a God, that is present at all times, and in all places : he was from all eternity, is now, and ever shall be world without end : he is without any manner of diminution or alteration, never changing his will, although he can alter his work without the change of his purpose : he is all eye to see, and ear to hear, and one day will be all hand to punish those daring mortals that even surpass in malice the infernal fiends, who own a God and tremble at his presence : then he will exact a strict account of all those that presume to call in question his unlimited power, more particularly exerted in the creating of

all things out of nothing, or that dis-own his infinite being: he is just to all his decrees and sentences; a terrible God to those that fall under his indignation, but plenteous in goodness to those that believe his divine attributes; and more especially free in grace, to those that come to him for indulgence, through the merits of his only Son Jesus Christ."

The gentleman replied, "that those were common opinions, and only maxims of state to keep the world in a regular discipline, that the most refined politicians had infused them into the minds of others, and that by a long succession of ages, they were so generally received by the credulous, and unthinking part of mankind, that they became as it were a second nature, and no arguments were sufficiently strong, to dissuade men from embracing those principles: but if you are so wise as to know what God is, pray discover to me how you can be certain there is

such a being?" I made answer, "That the being of God was plainly demonstrated by his works and wonders, such as the admirable frame of the heavens and earth, the sun, the moon and stars; by the various changes and revolutions that happen in the world: by the wonderful peace that constantly attend the good actions of every man's life, and the dreadful horrors that seize on the vital spirits of those that wilfully transgress the righteous laws of heaven: by the testimony of the holy Scriptures, that fully prove there is such a being, as a great and mighty God; by the general consent of nations, as well barbarous as civilized; and by divers apparitions that have been sent abroad in the world, to encourage the good, and terrify the wicked, of which I shall produce one that is very remarkable.

"It is recorded in the life of Bruno, an approved author, and attested by other authentic writers, that there was

a certain doctor at Paris, who by his learning and holiness of life, according to human appearance, had acquired a noble reputation among the most circumspect christians of that age : but when the corps of this person deceased, was brought to the church on a bier, as was usual in those days, and when the priest was pronouncing these words, or words to the same effect, “ We therefore commit his body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, and dust to dust, in a sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection to eternal life :” he suddenly arose and sat on the bier, and with a dreadful voice, cryed out, “ I am accused at the judgment-seat of the just God :” at which mournful cry, the people were extremely astonished, and went out of the church with great precipitation. The next day, when they returned to make an end of the funeral obsequies, and the same words were repeated, the dead body rose up again, and made

a hideous outcry, saying, “ I am judged by the righteous judgment of God ;” whereupon the people ran away again in a terrible fright. On the third day the greatest part of the inhabitants of the city met together, and upon the repeating of the same words, the corps stood up again, and cried with a more formidable voice than before, “ I am condemned before the just tribunal of God ;” which occasioned a sad reflection, that a man reputed so unblamable in his life and conversation, nevertheless according to his own confession, should be damned to eternal ages: insomuch that many judicious persons took an occasion to withdraw themselves from the hurry and noise of a vain Atheistical world, to a private retirement, that they might secure their immortal souls at that great and terrible day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed ; for by this mournful monitor they were plainly warned,

that though they might deceive an inconsiderate and unweary multitude, by appearing to be really virtuous, when at the same time their hearts were full of the rancour of unbelief, and conscious of the greatest guilt; yet they could not mock an omniscient and heart-searching God, whose being is plainly proved by this notable example, and many others of the like nature.

But further, “I will make it appear there is a God, by following the dictates of natural reason in all the controverted points and frivolous objections started by Atheists. Amongst all the celebrated authors, I have met with, or ever heard of, that argue against the being of a God, none were able to discover to me or any other person living, how the heavens were created, and all the powers therein; or how the foundation of the earth was laid; none could bring any proof,



that ever any mortal man ; by all his art and strength ; by all his wit and industry ; by all his learning and philosophy ; by all his wisdom and subtilty ; could find means to spread out the firmament like a curtain, or frame the globe of earth ; to measure the length, depth and breadth of the boundless ocean ; to cause the winds to blow, or the day to dawn ; the sun to rise, or the moon to shine, the stars to glitter ; the sea to ebb ; the earth to tremble ; the heavens to roar with thunder and lightning ; the clouds to gather the rain, and let it fall in gentle showers to refresh the parched earth ; the seasons of the year to alter their natural course ; the grass to grow in the meadows ; the trees, shrubs and planets to bring forth fruit and flowers ; the dew to fall ; the fogs to disperse themselves ; the vapours to rise out of the earth and sea ; the air to freeze or thaw ; the snow and hail to congeal ; the earth to gape and disclose her

inmost caverns; the dead to rise out of their graves; the blind to see, the dumb to speak, the deaf to hear, or the lame to walk.

“Is there any man upon the face of the earth, that can throw the sun into an eclipse by day, or draw a veil over the moon by night? Or can he declare who breathed into me the breath of life, or infused into man that knowledge, which distinguishes him from the brute beasts that perish? If thou attributest all these wonderful operations to nature, then show me the first cause of that nature; and when thou hast used all the evasions that can be thought of, silence will be thy last refuge, or else thou wilt be obliged to have recourse to the cause of causes, which must of necessity be the eternal God.”

After my above mentioned friend had given ear for some time to my discourse, he frankly owned, that many of my arguments made some show

of reason, but urged, "That though he should suppose the being of a God, yet he could not be induced to believe, there was any heaven prepared for the righteous, or hell for sinners," and that his opinion of a deity was, "The more we think of it, the more we are confounded:" as for any concern about matters of religion, he took it to be a needless trouble; neither could he believe a particular providence that rules over the world, or is in any wise interested in the management of sublunary affairs; adding, "That such a glorious and mighty being as God, is not to be moved by the petitions of so frail a creature as man."

My answer was, "that he had filled my heart with horror, and moved my affections to that degree, that I could freely break out with floods of tears, to see a person of his parts entertaining so mean an opinion of so sovereign a being: nay, I told him, he plainly confuted himself, according to the

rule of reason ; for if my former arguments had convinced him of the being of a God, he must needs attain to the belief, that he is most wise and almighty, as is evident from his works : then it follows, he must and will be pleased with mankind that so much resembles himself : since truth and goodness are to be found in some measure in a rational creature, but most transcendently in God ; therefore it may be reasonably infered, that God will condescend so low as to hear the prayers of those that come to him, with a full belief of his truth, and an absolute recumbency on his infinite mercy ; and that there is a reward for all good men in a future state, and a place of endless pains for the vile and vicious ; so that whatever he might think to the contrary now, he would find it to be the natural result of such courses of life, as well as the justice of God in rewarding the righteous, and

afflicting the wicked, according to their respective deserts.

“ For in regard that the human soul is a spirit, there is no ground to believe, it shall dissolve into soft air, or be annihilated, when it is set free from the earthly clogs of a gross body ; but that at the judgment of the great and general assizes, it will be sensible of all the good or bad actions, that were committed, when it dwelt in the frail tabernacle of flesh and blood ; so that if its actions were blameless, it will ascend to the highest regions, but if it be conscious of guilt it will sink into the lowest gulf of perdition. In this mortal state, the changes of the world have so great an influence upon our thoughts, that they too often prove advantages to the irreligious, and snares to the godly ; but in the future life above, the soul shall have a clear and distinct idea of good and evil : which will be a means to enhance the joys of the blessed spirits, and to in-

crease the torments of the damned : so that I look upon it as one of the greatest contradictions imaginable, to acknowledge the being of a God, and not to believe at the same time, that there is a day approaching, when justice will be done between the good and the bad, between the righteous and the unjust, between seraphic spirits and ungodly Atheists, between angels of light and infernal fiends, between ravenous oppressions and injured innocence ; since it plainly appears, an equal retribution to all persons, according to their merits, cannot be made in this lower world.

“ But to render the matter more intelligible, he that once admits the belief of a God, who created all things out of a confused chaos, must needs allow that he takes a particular care of the works of his own hands ; for it is evident, it can be no matter of difficulty for a most wise, omnipotent, and omnipresent being to observe all

the actions of human creatures, or to govern the world with a strict and regular discipline. Then what reasonable man can imagine, this original fountain of wisdom itself in the abstract, should raise so noble a fabric, as the universe is, and at the same time take no thought about it, but let all go to ruin and confusion ?

“ On the contrary, we find by daily experience, that there is a supreme power, which rules in heaven and earth ; if thou say it is not God, tell me what other being there is, that is capable of governing after such a manner ? Is it the sun, the moon, or the whole company of planets, that bear rule night and day ? Or is it the numerous host of fixed stars that are predominant in their several orbs ? Is it the rising or falling of the ocean, or the vast quantity of waters contained therein ? Is it this huge mass of earth, or the increase that springs out of it ? Is it the atmosphere, where the va-

pours ascend, or the lustre of the empyreal heaven? Is it the slow motion of the primum mobile, or the rapid course of the lower orbs? Is it the swiftness of fiery meteors, or the hovering of clouds that gather the rain, hail, and snow? Is it a gentle breeze of air, or the united fury of all the boisterous winds let loose at once out of the subterraneous caverns? Is it the force of spring, summer, autumn, or winter? Is it the energy of nature, the random course of fortune, or the casual jumping together of atoms? Is it the whole race of mankind in general, or any one particular person? If thou cannot make it appear to be any of these causes, tell me what it is that disposes of all things, and keeps the world in such an admirable order? If thou cannot give me no resolve, in this point, thy silence must assure thyself, as well as me, that it is the sole power of God, whose being thou art so strenuously endeavouring to oppose."



The gentleman returned for answer, “ that my arguments were indeed agreeable to sense, and natural, but when he took many other material points into consideration, he could not but think that what I had delivered, was only a fine plausible discourse, that contained more elegance than truth : for (said he) if this God you have been discoursing of, is what you make him to be ; viz. a great and glorious being, one that heretofore created all things out of nothing, now governs the world in truth and justice, and will hereafter reward every man according to his works in another state, tell me how it can be consistent with the rules of his infinite justice and mercy, to punish a poor frail creature, with everlasting pains, for some miscarriages in the present world, or to reward some good actions, with the joys and pleasures above to all eternity. As for instance, what should we think of an earthly prince, who always bore the title of a

merciful king to all his subjects, generous in forgiving his enemies, and ready to reward his friends ; I say, if such a prince should publish a declaration, that if any should offend for the future, in word or deed, he would cause them to be tormented with the most exquisite pains imaginable ; though he knew at the same, time that what they said or did, could not in the least diminish his grandeur, or detract from his reputation much less dethrone his majesty.

“ Suppose we should observe how the officers of this mighty monarch proceeded to condemn those poor creatures, to cast them into a caldron of boiling oil ; and that the miserable wretches were to undergo such cruel tortures as long as life continued, without any intermission of pain or mitigation of sorrow, though they cried incessantly for mercy, and made the most solemn protestations of amendment. On the other side, were we to

see some, who had been as notorious rebels as ever lived suing for their pardon before the sentence of condemnation was passed; being induced to a sincere repentance either by the hopes of reward, or fear of punishment; and how these persons were not only graciously received into favour, but also dignified with all the honours that a most magnificent prince can bestow; nay, farther than this, admitted into their sovereign's palace to attend his royal court, in the greatest splendor that can be conceived.

If such proceedings as these (continued my friend) in a temporary monarch appear tyrannical, cruel, inhuman and partial; nay, very much unbecoming to the grandeur of a generous mind, what can be said of the like methods of dispensation, with respect to God, whom you affirm to excel an earthly prince in mercy and clemency, as much as the sun surpasses a star in lustre? If you can solve this difficul-

ty, with sound judgment and reason, as you have done some other doubts, I shall readily believe all the divine attributes in their farthest extent, and look upon the works of God as just and true; but if you fail in any particular, I shall be confirmed in my former opinion, that there is no God; or if there be, he takes no notice to all human affairs; much less shall I be induced to believe, that there will be any rewards or punishments in a future state: and admitting it were so, how can God be said to be just or merciful in making a frail creature unhappy to eternal ages for a few mistakes made in the lower world?"

I replied, "that if he were not given over to a reprobate mind; I doubted not but to vindicate the justice and mercy of God after such an effectual manner, as to bring him and all other Sceptics to a free acknowledgment of the excellency of the divine conduct, in punishing the ill actions of the wick-

ed with everlasting torments, and crowning the righteous with those delights that are far above our finite conceptions to apprehend. As for the comparison you have made between God and an earthly prince, the case will appear to be different in many respects ; nevertheless, before I come to explain the methods of divine justice, I shall clear what has been alledged against a monarch that should govern according to such rules as you have but now represented, and justify such proceedings in every particular. For example, suppose the king and the great council of the nation, should make several good laws, to punish villainies that are committed within the realm, with the severest tortures that could be invented, according to the nature and circumstances of their crimes, and also to promote all his loyal and faithful subjects by some means answerable to their singular worth and

merit, with this clause, never to abate the punishments, nor to lessen the rewards upon any account whatsoever.

“ Then all these statutes and ordinances to be printed in a fair character, that none may plead ignorance, as not knowing the laws of the land, which may be as follows: ‘ Be it enacted by the king’s special command, with the lords and commons in parliament assembled, that whoever in their right senses, are grown up to the years of maturity shall by words or actions, or any other means whatsoever, violate, infringe, or break any of the laws or statutes herein contained, according to their true intent, purport, and meaning; shall undergo such punishments and penalties, as are hereafter mentioned.

“ And be it farther enacted by the authority aforesaid, that all they that diligently observe and act conformably to the tenor of these laws, shall be partakers of all the privileges and ad-

vantages hereafter specified, without any respect of persons whatsoever : that is to say, whoever shall presume to deny the being of a God, or openly declare, that all things were produced by nature, or shall utter any blasphemous expressions against the deity or commit any fact that is derogatory to his honour, shall be cast into a caldron of boiling oil, there to be made sensible of the folly of Atheism, infidelity and profaness : but whoever orders his life and conversation, so as to confirm others in the belief of a supreme being, and to glorify his sovereign creator, shall have all the preferments in church and state, that his natural parts are capable of, or the circumstances of public affairs can admit him to.

And be it farther enacted, that whoever shall betray his king and country, or shall be concerned in any plot, either directly or indirectly, to undermine or subvert the established constitution of the government, shall be torn to pieces

by wild beasts, that so he may know by woful experience the heinousness of treason, and how detestable a crime it is to divide, and sow the seeds of discord in a nation, that otherwise might have long enjoyed the fruits of peace and unity. But they that continue loyal to their prince and true to their fellow subjects, shall have all the encouragements of a royal favourite. Be it also enacted, that whoever is guilty of wilful murder, shall die the same death by which he destroyed his innocent brother. I am fully persuaded, that you and all other men endued with reason, would highly commend them for having no respect to persons, any farther than to punish transgressors and to reward those that conscientiously discharge their several duties; and your own private sentiments must needs inform you how happy we of this nation should be, if such wholesome laws were made, and duly put in execution. I shall now proceed to vin-



dicare the divine justice, in inflicting punishments on the wicked, and bestowing rewards on the righteous to all eternity.

“ When Almighty God placed our first parents Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden, he made a covenant with them, that they should freely participate of the great variety of fruits there planted, only excepting that of one tree, commonly called the ‘*forbidden fruit* ;’ and told them positively, ‘ *That in the day they eat thereof, they shall surely die :*’ but, alas ! these poor deluded souls, giving way to the solicitations of the subtle serpent, could not be satisfied with all the delectable varieties, the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, had so liberally bestowed upon them ; so that being urged on by a fatal curiosity, they vainly fancied, there was some secret and more transcendent delight in that which was forbidden, than in all their other enjoyments. Now the great God

having reserved but one tree, as it were for his own use, or to pleasure his divine will, as a token of his dominion and sovereignty; was it not highly reasonable, that finite creatures should obey in keeping the covenant of their infinite and most wise creator, with respect to that one particular command, and content themselves with what God had allotted for their satisfaction, especially since he had indulged them with so great abundance? let me appeal to the bar of thy conscience, and leave it to thy own thoughts to determine, whether God did not act righteously in turning these wretches out of paradise, intailing a curse on their posterity, ‘*that in the sweat of their face they should eat bread,*’ and adjudging them to undergo a temporal death, as a just judgment for their presumptuous arrogance and rebellion?

“But to render the matter more obvious to your capacity, I will here produce a singular example, which may

serve as a lively emblem. I have read that in the reign of king *James* I. there lived a poor labouring man, who whenever he was at work, especially digging, used almost at every stroke he fetched, to call upon *Adam* in a most passionate manner. As this man was digging on a certain day in a garden near the road, a gentleman accidentally rode by, and hearing him muttering to himself, stopt to listen to what was said : observing that as often as his spade entered the earth, he cried out, “ Oh *Adam, Adam!*” Whereupon the gentleman alighted from his horse, made up to the peasant, and demanded of him, “ for what reason he exclaimed so much against *Adam?*” His answer was, ‘ that if *Adam* had not eaten the forbidden fruit, he need not have been forced to get his living by the sweat of his brow, but might have lived without labour, and he admired that *Adam* should fall into so fatal an error.’ Then the gentleman asked him,

“ if he had been in his fore-father’s stead, would he not have done the same thing ?”

The peasant replied, “ he should never have been so curious, as to covet the tasting of the fruit of that particular tree, since he had the liberty to use all the rest.” Then the gentleman bid him be of good cheer, leave his work, and go along with him ; to which proposal he readily complied. As soon as they arrived at the mansion-house, the gentleman shewed him all his fine apartments, splendid banqueting-rooms, costly furniture, spacious walks, delightful gardens, pleasant groves, verdant bowers, cool grottoes, large fish-ponds, numerous attendants, sumptuous apparel, rich jewels, delicious fare, &c. “ All these things,” said he “ shall be at thy command, during the term of life ; I will free thee from that painful curse which *Adam* has entailed on thy body ; I will clothe thee with fine linen, and noble

robes of state ; thou shalt be my constant companion, and shall partake of all my enjoyments; nevertheless on this condition, that thou shalt not at any time presume to uncover one particular dish at my table, and that whenever thou shalt act contrary to this injunction, at that very instant thou shalt be striped of all thy ornaments, and turned to thy former drudgery."

The gentleman having ended his discourse, the poor peasant was immediately transported with raptures of unspeakable joy, upon the sight of so great a change in so short a space of time ; a change that was altogether unaccountable and unexpected ; and so much the more admirable, in regard that these enjoyments were not only to continue, for a day, a week, a month or a year, but to the end of his life. Who can express the great satisfaction he found in his mind, and the solemn protestations he made, never to play the fool like *Adam*, or be tempted to

forfeit his happiness, by uncovering that dish, since he had so many others at his disposal ? Thus he fondly pleased himself with the thoughts of a future uninterrupted happiness for many years ; but alas ! ere a few months were expired, he was suddenly deprived of all his state and grandeur. For on a certain day, when this fortunate person had fed plentifully upon all the most exquisite ragous and dainties that can be imagined, he was left alone in the room, to do as he thought fit ; the covered dish remaining by him on the table.

Here he might stretch his wearied limbs on an easy couch, and take the refreshment of a sweet repose ; or he might open a window and look out into the shady groves, so as to hear the melodious notes of fine birds chirping on the boughs of every tree, and see those winged quiristers, fluttering up and down like so many nimble messengers of heaven, and chanting forth

their great creators praise: or he might take a few turns amidst the fragrant smells that arise from beautiful flowers on the side of every verdant bank; or he might carry his angling-rod to the pond or river side, and there sitting down under some shady covert, solace himself with that delightful exercise; whilst the purlin streams glide on insensibly with silent floats, and the numerous carps, tenches, trouts, breams, dace, barbels, and other noble sorts of fish, are ambitiously striving to catch at the bait. These and many other innocent divertisements of the like nature, might have entertained his leisure hours abroad, with much more satisfaction than his vain desire of staying within, to see what curiosity lay hid under the covered dish.

However, being persuaded that no eye saw him, he judged that he might securely behold the rarity, which had been so long concealed within the spacious compass of so noble a charger, and

at last resolved to lift up the cover ; which was no sooner done, but a poor silly mouse leaped out, and so extremely surprised the man, that he could no longer retain his former sedateness of mind, which might easily be discovered by the change of his countenance ; insomuch that his lord suspecting the occasion, looked into the dish ; but finding the mouse gone, no doubt he expostulated with his new guest, after some such manner as this : “ O thou unfaithful wretch, did I take thee from a cottage, and bring thee to my palace, where I stript thee of all thy rags, and caused thee to be cloathed with gorgeous apparel ? have I redeemed thee from all thy hard labour, and freed thee from thy daily care, and dost thou thus requite my good will towards thee with black ingratitude, by proving infamously false to so bountiful a benefactor ? Now I will incontinently divest thee of all my favours, and turn thee into my fields, amongst my meanest



slaves, where thou shalt have an overseer continually to spur thee on, and confine thee to the severest drudgery : neither shalt thou be ever suffered for the future to sit at my table, or so much as to enter within my gates ; then let me hear no more reflections on thy first parents, but look at home, on the traitor within thy own breast.”

Now I cannot forbear fancying I see the poor wretch miserably degraded and stript of all his glory, trudging out of the stately apartments, with as much regret, as he entered in with joy ; fetching deep sighs, and casting back many a sorrowful look on that noble structure from whence he but now came out. Methinks I hear him bemoaning himself in such terms as these. “ What an unfortunate creature am I, that should so preposterously violate my engagements with so worthy a gentleman, who took pity of me in my low estate, and so lovingly commiserated my distress ! Whom

can I blame but myself, since were it not for my own default, I might have been as happy as the day was long? How shall I inure myself to my former labour, and feed on my coarse fare, or lie on my straw bed."! Do but see how the man takes up his spade, and handles it more awkwardly than before, uttering many a grievous sigh: yet I hear no complaints of *Adam*, but he is ready to tear himself into a thousand pieces; neither does he make any reflections upon the generous gentleman, but is forced to lay all the blame at his own door.

I am apt to believe that what has been related is real matter of fact: but whether the narrative be true or false, I am sure the moral scope of it is undeniable, and very pertinent to my present purpose: for in all conferences I ever had a due regard to the disposition of the persons, with whom I was engaged, endeavouring to suit my discourse to every one's *genius* or

capacity. Thus when I am discoursing with a learned divine, I do not talk after such a manner, as if he knew not how to write or read ; and when I am conversing with an illiterate person, I make no mention of topics relating to philosophy or mathematics, because I know him to be altogether ignorant of those matters : likewise when I am disputing with an Atheist, or one that cannot entertain an equitable thought of God, with respect to his infinite mercy and goodness, I think it improper to cite any text of scripture, till I can bring him to a belief, that it is the undoubted word of truth ; neither will I proceed to relate the loving kindness of the Lord at large, till I have handled some familiar matters by way of a preliminary discourse : but I am now come to the main point I designed chiefly to insist upon, in vindicating the justice of God.

The whole race of mankind lay groaning for a long time under the transgression of their first parents,

having only some dark types and shadows of a promised Messiah, for the space of four thousand years ; till God of his infinite mercy, sent his only son out of his bosom, to offer us peace here, and a crown of glory hereafter, upon condition that we keep his commandments.

Now these precepts are recorded by divine authority, in the Old and New Testaments, to be a standing rule of faith to all succeeding generations ; directing us how to steer our course through the turbulent sea of this world, so as to arrive safe at the port of the New *Jerusalem* : there we may be informed what vices we are to eschew, and what virtues we are to exercise ; as also, what punishments we must undergo to eternal ages, if we wilfully neglect our duty, and what glory we shall possess in the presence of God, upon a strict observing of all his holy ordinances. He that has made these unalterable laws cannot lie, “ neither is there any

variableness with *him* or shadow of change;" besides that by revoking the punishment, or lessening the reward, he would divest himself of that justice, which so essentially belongs to his nature: for how can God be said to be just in receiving a wicked person into his favour, without his repentance and regeneration? Or how could such a person act in heaven, unless it was to turn it into hell? for by what tenure does the former bear that name, but that it is a place where no impure thing can enter; or what is the distinguishing character of hell, but a place, where no pure creature inhabits.

So that upon the whole matter, I think I cannot clear the justice of God in a more proper and apposite manner, than by showing what hell is, and why so called: not but that I may err in my opinion, and shall be willing to retract it, whenever more solid arguments shall be offered than those I now produce. The state of hell is represen-

ted in scripture, by fire and brimstone; by, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and many other metaphors of the like nature. Several ancient and modern divines of our nation have undertaken to describe it as a place of material fire; nay some proceed so far as to affirm, that there is as much difference between the scorching flames of hell, and those that are felt on earth, as there is between a painted and a real fire: some give it out, that to be cast into a caldron of boiling lead, is but a flea-bite in comparison of the infernal furnace, where the damned shall suffer endless pains.

These and many other representations of the like nature, are usually made of hell, and God grant that none now living may ever enter therein, to try the experiment; but my conceptions of it are altogether different; and I may perhaps be as capable of defining the torments peculiar to that dreadful station, as the

greater part of mankind are ; for if ever any mortal on this side the grave, endured the pains of the damned, I am the person. Not that I would presume to contradict the revealed word of God, or to raise any new notions concerning hell ; far be it from me, I would not in the least entertain any such thoughts : and indeed so many novel opinions relating to articles of faith, have been started within these few years, that there is no need of broaching any more ; every age being apt to confute old errors, and to beget new ones ; but the doctrine I shall lay down with respect to heaven and hell, I hope will be taken as a further confirmation of the truth of the holy scriptures, and extirpate those blind notions that serve only to perplex the mind of weak christians, and to encourage Atheists in their obstinate infidelity.

I think it must of necessity be acknowledged that many passages of the scripture are prophetic, some parabo-

lical, and others mystical: in several places, it represents to our view, the likeness of things here on earth, that it may the better reach our weak capacities: Thus it couches the description of hell, under several figurative expressions; as, a bottomless pit of fire, smoke and brimstone; everlasting burnings; a furnace of flames that cannot be quenched; howling, mourning, weeping, lamentation, a worm that never dies, &c.

Besides, many other emblems which so lively set forth the future state of the damned, according to human apprehension, that no words can express it in a more clear and distinct manner; therefore I shall keep close to the true scope and meaning of the sacred text; and as far as I am able to apprehend, vary or depart no farther from it, than that differs from the word of God, which is unquestionably one and the same thing; and I cannot but promise myself, that what I have to deliver on



this subject, will effectually remove many doubts and scruples that lie depending in some wavering and unsettled minds.

Here I must profess I neither do, nor ever did believe, since I came to the years of discretion, that there was, is, or shall be any material fire made use of in the lower regions, for the everlasting punishment of the damned; but I take hell to be in all places where God is absent, both in the present world and the future state: there is undoubtedly a hell on this side the grave; and another, when time shall be no more; that is to say, a temporal hell, and an eternal one: but there is as much difference between one and the other, with respect to duration and the exquisiteness of pain, as there is between the main ocean, and a rivulet or small brook. Then first I will endeavour to show with all the perspicuity imaginable, what a temporal hell is, with the pains that are peculiar

thereto, and how long it may continue. There is no person that is baptized into the christian faith, that professes to believe and fear the true God, and yet lives unanswerably to this belief or fear, but may be said to be actually in this hell that I am now treating of: for I experimentally know it to be so: and though some may persuade themselves to the contrary, they will find it to be certainly true, if they do but seriously consider the following reflections.

Man is endued with such a discern-faculty above all other creatures, that he can distinguish good from evil, and readily apprehend when he is really happy, and when utterly miserable; he is sensible, that there is no true felicity in this life, which is apparently one of the greatest arguments that prove a future state: he perceives that when he does not live conformably to those wise ends of his creation, there is a dismal cloud of fears that over-shadow his

greatest pleasures : so that any person may as well imagine that he is safely arrived at his intended journey's end in a country that is far distant, as to expect to enjoy an uninterrupted tranquility of mind, without the favour and love of God : and all such, do actually live in a hell here on earth, so long as they continue in the known practice of any one wilful or premeditated sin : for what is man but his mind ? if that bosom friend be at ease, I am essentially happy let my outward condition bear any denomination whatsoever ; but if not, I am in a state of misery : and it is impossible my mind should be composed, when I act contrary to known principles.

Thus I may wear an imperial crown, and sway the sceptres of three noble kingdoms ; but if I am conscious to myself, that I do not govern my subjects according to the precepts of heaven, nor act conformably to the dictates of justice, equity and clemen-

cy, I really inhabit in the regions of an earthly hell, which is a lively emblem of that in the other world : for there is a worm that never dies, but is always preying upon my galled conscience, and will incessantly continue gnawing, till I *break off my sins by righteousness, and shewing mercy to the poor ; till I do that which is lawful and right* in the sight of God and man. Although I were possessed of an estate valued at a hundred thousand pounds a year, and enjoyed all the variety of delights this world can afford ; nevertheless if I live in lust and concupiscence, suffering my thoughts to rove about in quest after my neighbour's wife, or any other unchaste embraces, there is a flame of fire that is always burning in my breast, and is never quenched as long as I continue in such lewd practices : this, apparently is a hell to me, on the hither side of eternity, and a fore-taste of that which is to come.

Although I enjoy a perfect health of body, soundness of mind and memory, with many other transcendent blessings; yet if I retain a covetous insatiable desire of these earthly mouldering treasures, and be not satisfied with that portion which the divine providence has allotted me, this is a pit of destruction that has no bottom; so that the more I have the more I am still craving, and the longer I live the deeper I sink into the dangerous gulph: for as long as I covet my neighbour's inheritance, and seek after more than I can manage or dispose of to any good purpose, I am running headlong into an infernal abyss that swallows up my real felicity. If I live in much greater splendour than the rest of my neighbour's, and at the same time carry on any malicious or envious designs against them, repining at the good fortune of others, and never being satisfied with my own enjoyments; this is

a ravenous vulture continually gnawing my entrails and preying upon my vital spirit. This miserable state of life disturbs my repose, imbitters all my comforts, sours all my joy, and is a lively representation of those transports of rage and envy, with which the damned are and will be possessed in the everlasting hell to eternal ages."

And farther, "if I fall into extreme despair, and have no ground to hope for the divine mercy, that is a most dreadful hell to me in this world, and a perfect resemblance of those inexpressible torments, which all profane wretches must suffer, time without end; unless their ruin be prevented by a timely repentance. If I am a blasphemer or adulterer, if I give way to unruly passion, cruelty, malice or revenge, or commit any other enormous crime, I am as much in hell, and in the same condition with those lost souls, as if I actually endured the torments of the

other life ; though the tortures are not so exquisite, nor the pain so violent, with respect to their several degrees. As for instance, I may be very angry with my servant for a slight offence ; but not in so great a rage, as if he had murdered my wife, or some other near relation ; and it is certain, my passion upon account of the former fault, would soon abate, but my fury that was raised by the latter inhuman act, would daily increase.

Thus a temporary hell, and an eternal hell are of the same nature, and the only difference between them is, that the punishments of the wicked, are nothing near so great nor lasting in this world, as they will be in the other state ; the former serving only as a small specimen or foretaste of their future consummate misery. All incorrigible profligate wretches are now at this very instant, as much out of the favour and love of God, as ever they will be ; I mean, such as live and die in a

sinful and unregenerate state. I shall endeavour farther to illustrate the matter, by a familiar comparison, which take thus : when a traitor is confined in the tower of London, and lies under the sentence of perpetual imprisonment ; though for the present he possesses most part of his former enjoyments, nevertheless he is as notorious a criminal, and as much a prisoner, as if he were removed to Newgate, or the county jail, and deprived of all the necessaries of human life : doubtless such a confinement would be an emblem of what he must afterwards undergo, when all his wealth is confiscated, and his body cast into a loathsome dungeon, where he is to lie without redemption, and perish without relief.

I hope I have plainly proved by several solid and undeniable arguments, that there is a hell here on earth : but to make it more fully appear, I shall produce matter of fact, by my



own sad experience. I came within the confines of this hell, in that very moment, when I was capable of distinguishing between good and evil, or between virtue and vice : and as I made a daily progress in sin, by insensible degrees ; I proceeded in motion, much like the silent streams that descend from the rising springs, whose clearest water is soon defiled, by the numerous channels through which it runs, still it becomes as foul as the standing puddles, which are corrupted by many mixtures, and only fit to be conveyed into the common-shore, where these impure waters still glide on, till at last they fall into the main ocean ; the brackish taste of which is more unpleasant, than that of filthy mud at the bottom of stagnating ponds, which cannot be purified but by the refiner's fire. Thus my purest thoughts were polluted, and the charming sedateness of my mind changed into a furious storm ; when all the innocent actions of my tender

years, were blasted like a fading flower, whose noble colour and fragrant smell are suddenly turned to putrefaction.

Thus I came naked into the world, and thus sin has since defiled my pure garments ; thus I entered upon the borders of guilt, and thus I launched out into the deep of a temporal hell, where the fiery darts and vehement flames have kindled other flames in my breast, whose burning heats, no floods can extinguish, but those which flow from eyes truly penitent. From the day of my entrance into sin, at the years of discretion, till the day of my regeneration or new birth, I account myself to have been as really in a temporal hell, as if I were condemned to the miseries of the eternal one, in case I had continued in my former vicious practices. I readily acknowledge my inability, to make a true description of all ill habits and pollutions I unhappily contracted in a long course of im-

piety and rebellion against my sovereign creator ; so that I shall content myself only to give a short account of the confusion of soul, which ever and anon seized on me in all my private retirements.

It would be too melancholy a scene, to draw all the clouds of amazement that hung over my head for many years, during which time I was continually exposed to the fiery darts of the devil, and remained under his tyrannical government ; floating up and down the world like a shattered vessel in the vast ocean, liable to the grievous insult of every swelling wave : thus this cruel tormentor, tossed me from one stage of the world to another ; so that when I found a dissatisfaction in one kind of enjoyment, he tempted me with fresh alluring baits, and insensibly drawing me round the fatal circle, laid the closest siege where my defence was weakest. When I began to be sensible of the vanity of honor,

then the pains I had taken in his service must needs be rewarded with abundance of wealth : but having perceived the drudgery of heaping up riches, I was persuaded to divert myself with company and agreeable conversation. Thus the father of lies urged me on from one engagement to another, till at last my torments augmented, and grew more boisterous than a raging sea, where the higher the storm raises, so much the more the waters foam ; so that the farther I launched out into folly, the more I found myself involved in troubles, and surrounded in the labyrinth of misery.

“ I am not able to express the confusion and anguish, that used to pull down my spirits and distract my mind, during my continuance in an habitual course of sin : for I have often longed for the setting sun, in hopes that an evening’s diversion might assuage the gripes of the preceding day ; but as soon as the stars appeared, all my long

wished for refreshments were spun out in an empty dissatisfaction. Then having entered my chamber, my tired senses and fatigued body demanded some repose : but alas ! The torture of a guilty conscience, would nor suffer mine eyes to slumber, nor the temples of my head to take my rest : so that no sooner had I laid myself down in bed, or on my couch, but various thoughts suddenly darted horror into my mind, and filled me with amazement. Thus have I frequently spent my tedious minutes in tossing and tumbling to and fro, like a person that is grievously afflicted, or one in a burning fever ; longing for the break of day, with greater impatience than a distressed mariner encompassed on all sides with rocks and quick-sands in a dark and gloomy night. If at any time, by reason of a long fatigue, or numerous disappointments in a sinful course, mine eyes have closed to rest, frightful dreams of devils and infernal fiends have disturb-

ed the imaginative faculty, and appeared as terrible to me, as if it were a real vision, and all my natural senses were quite awake.

These are some of those dreadful convulsions that have seized on my mind, upon the serious consideration of having offended God and violated his most righteous laws; but they come far short of what I am now about to deliver : for I shall draw a scene of hell in as lively a representation, as perhaps can possibly be done by any man now living, every part of which will astonish the sensitive soul, and usher in the streams of amazement ; this is a tragedy not artificial but natural, acted not to please the fancy, but to affect the mind, not to cause weeping for joy, but mourning for fear, lest the same direful misfortunes should happen or the like storms should make so furious an attack, upon the unavoidable approach of the king of terrors. And indeed, on *May* 3d. 1696, the harbingers

of death seized on my vitals with so great a violence, that in the space of a few days, all expectations of life were suddenly over-spread with so black a cloud, that no mortal could believe any otherwise, but that the sun of my animal spirits must of necessity set under that dark shade, never to rise again till the dawn of an everlasting day.

Thus I perceived the evening of a short pilgrimage drawing towards a speedy close, and the room in which I lay, beset with as gross darkness at noon-day, as it is used to be in the dead of a winter-night ; where the dear wife of my bosom, *the desire of mine eyes*, was mourning like a dove, and my aged mother bedewing her gray hairs with tears, and wishing she had gone down to the grave, before that sorrowful day of my so near approach to eternity: if at any time I saw the light I beheld my disconsolate relations wringing their hands and shaking their heads, and ever anon, I could over-hear

the private consultations and whispers of my physicians, one of whom (as I cannot but remember it) said, ‘ *he will die upon the return of the next fit:*’ Then came several divines, to do me what good offices lay in their power, and to assist me with their best advice, during these dismal circumstances ; I lay shivering like an aspen leaf, under the surprising agonies of a dying hour, having now so clear a view, and so quick an apprehension of the errors of my passed life, that I discerned folly in all its natural colors, and could not but loath its deformity with the utmost detestation

Oh the horror, confusion and shame that seized on my drooping spirits and trembling nerves ! now (said I) sentence of death is already passed upon me, and I begin to feel the torments of a deeper hell, which darts its flames into my immortal soul, even before I take my last farewell of this world ; then my sorrows were extremely augmented, not upon account of the



sharpest pangs of bodily pain, but for those of an ulcerated and gangrened conscience. O most terrible sight to me, when I beheld satan striking his fiery darts into my distracted mind, and telling me in express terms, there was no hope of my salvation, no pardon of sins, no smiles of heaven to be expected, no possibility of my seeing the face of God to all eternity ; and that it was too late to cry for mercy, too late to pray, too late to atone for the follies of a mis-spent life ! And although I had not been altogether so vile, as the greatest part of mankind, and were innocent with respect to the crying sins of the age ; though I had often approached the Lord's table, and heard his holy word ; nevertheless I was conscious to myself of so many notorious omissions, and great failings in the performance of my duty, that almighty God might justly shut me out of the kingdom of heaven, and close me up in an endless night of pain and horror.

Thus the grand accuser of mankind constantly attended about my bed, during the time of my sickness ; magnifying my sins to the highest pitch, so as to make every small offence appear one of the most heinous crimes ; insinuating, that these convulsions and groans were not to be compared to the unspeakable tortures I must endure in the other state, and that all these afflictions would be increased to the most intense degree, in the gulph of everlasting perdition : insomuch that I longed to die, that I might know the utmost of the diabolical malice, being persuaded, that no torments in the other world, could possibly exceed my present misery ; the extreme anguish of which cast me into so violent a sweat, that the bed whereon I lay was like a wet bath ; the linen on my body and the night-cap on my head, might also have been wrung as it were clothes newly drawn out of a river. The transport of my passion was so excessive, that

four or five strong persons were scarce able to hold me in the bed, and my roaring was so loud, that most of the neighbour's round about, ran out of houses in a terrible fright ; whilst others that continued in their habitations, were all over seized with a fit of trembling, though they knew the occasion, and many stood in the street, like people amazed, or struck with a pannic fear ; every one concluding, I must needs expire that very hour, and not believing human nature to be capable of weathering such an outrageous storm of despair.

But that which was most wonderful is, that I retained the perfect use of all my senses, and distinctly knew every person about me, as appeared by the particular account I gave of all my pains, thoughts, words and actions, in as plain a manner as could be expressed. When the violence of this fit was somewhat allayed, I sensibly perceived myself deserted by God, in all the bitter agonies of

a most dreadful desperation ; for I then did and still do firmly believe, I at that time felt the utmost torments of those wretched souls that are lost for ever, and found myself absolutely excluded from the favour of my sovereign creator, and blessed redeemer ; concluding there was no possibility of reforming the wilful mistakes of my passed life, or I should be retrieved by any means whatsoever, from my due fate of being utterly undone.

I had also at the same time, a fair prospect of the *New Jerusalem*, where all appeared most glorious within, and of whose transcendent beauties I have but an imperfect idea, as not being admitted into those illustrious gates, the brightness of which far surpasses all the splendor of an earthly paradise : however this sight was extremely amazing to me, and filled my soul with indignation, in regard that I was sensible of my being shut out from that place of everlasting joys, and that now my soul

must range about the dark regions of horror and despair, till the resurrection of the dead upon the sounding of the last trumpet, when it will be more unhappy than ever, in meeting the body its old companion and abetter in sinful courses, at the general assizes ; there to receive together a final heavy doom to eternal punishments.

And indeed, I did as plainly see my precious soul wandering up and down among those infernal spirits, as I should actually do if I were to die at any time, in an unregenerate state ; and I had so clear a view of the miseries that sinners continue in, before the great judgment day, that no man living can convince me to the contrary. It was not an effect produced by the malignity of the disease, or an idle conceit of the distempered brain, but it was a real plain representation of the most deplorable condition of those wretches, on the other side of the grave, where time is swallowed up by eternity.

For I solemnly declare in the presence of the great and terrible God, at the thoughts of whose infinite majesty, my spirit trembles, that I would not lie under the like insupportable oppression of his wrathful indignation and almighty vengeance, for the space of one week, if I might by that means gain all the treasures of India, or the gold of Africa, or have all the kingdoms of the world at my disposal during a long and prosperous course of life: for I am no more capable of making a proper description or representation of what I underwent during that dreadful conflict: than I am able to count the stars in the firmament, or the number of sands on the seashore; it was apparently too great a calamity to be expressed in words, or to be described in writing by any pen on earth; for a wounded conscience who can bear?

Thus I have proved by reason and my own experience, that there is a temporal hell on this side the grave for

all those that have any sense of a God, and do not live conformably to his sacred laws; I have also showed, how long this hell may be said to continue, that is to say, from the years of discretion to the time of conversion, or to the hour of death; and now I shall proceed to explain the nature of the eternal hell, but so ample a description has been already made of it in treating of the former, that I hope my labor will be in a great measure superseded, and the less may suffice to be delivered on this article. So that having laid down my opinion, that there never was, is, nor shall be any material fire in hell, I come to produce my reasons for it, which are as follows: that the soul of man is a breath of life, infused by an almighty being, and not a bodily substance, that is capable of undergoing any misery by corporal pains, of what kind soever they may be; so that the former is undoubtedly of a more sublime nature, and will be

rewarded or punished, after a quite different manner. It is certain that God ordained corporal punishments for the material and mortal body, and not for the immaterial and immortal soul; such being fit only to be inflicted in this world, and not in that which is to come.

But farther, our own reason must needs induce us to believe, that the punishment of the soul in the future state, will be much of the same nature with what it is in the present, and we are all sensible, that the anguish of the spirit is different from the pains of the body. Thus when a judge condemns a malefactor, he does not doom his soul to any material punishment, but his body; for if the sentence be to be pressed, burnt, or starved; to be hanged, impaled, or torn to pieces; to be racked, whipt, or suffer any other exquisite pains, these material tortures may be extremely afflicting and grievous to the latter, but they cannot ef-



fect the former ; as being a divine ray, which is altogether impassible with respect to such sufferings : however I readily own, that the soul may participate of anguish with the body, and endure as much misery ; but it is of another kind ; for there is a natural and a spiritual sense of pain : so that the flesh, blood, and bones may be properly said to undergo the material punishment ; whilst the soul suffers a spiritual convulsion, which the body is not capable of feeling ; there being as much difference between one sort of pain and the other, as there is between a spiritual and a corporeal substance.

Therefore I have often admired, that men of a sound judgment should inconsiderately depart so far from the main scope, and meaning of the holy scriptures, as to hold, that there is a material punishment in hell, to be inflicted upon undone souls : and indeed, it is of so great a contradiction to di-

vinity and good sense, that I take it to be an absurd error. We may as well treat of the true nature of hell, as of what it is not; which would tend much more to the edification of our christian brethren, than a different practice.

However I would have none mistake my meaning in this particular, I do not maintain in the least, but that the pains of hell may be conveniently represented by familiar comparisons, since that is altogether agreeable to the word of God, and the weakness of human apprehension, but we ought to be very cautious about proceeding farther than sacred writ directs us: for we have no account in the Old or New Testament, that there is any material fire in hell, or that lost souls are to be tormented in the future state, with the same punishments that are usually inflicted on the body in this world. I could alledge several other reasons to

prove, that there are no more such material flames in the eternal hell, than there are in the temporal; but I think, those that have been already produced may be sufficient for this purpose: so that I shall now proceed to show, when those wretched souls that are utterly undone, fall into this bottomless pit of everlasting destruction, after what manner they will be punished there to eternal ages, and how such extreme severity consists with the justice of almighty God.

The soul of a sinner undoubtedly enters upon this state of hell, immediately after it has left the body; for my opinion is, that in that very moment the breath goes out of the nostrils, the spirit mounts up directly to *God that gave it*, and appears in his presence, to receive its final sentence of acquittal or condemnation, and as soon as it finds itself cast at the private tribunal of heaven, it knows the fate

that will forever attend it. I am also of opinion, that every such guilty soul is permitted to take a view of the gates of the *New Jerusalem*, and to see the glory of the celestial kingdom; by which means it may the better conceive what sin has deprived it of, and will be thereupon filled with extreme horror and indignation. My flesh trembles at the idea I have formed to myself of those wretched creatures, who will incessantly lament and bemoan their misfortune, to the tedious ages of eternity, after some such manner as this,

“ I am now banished the presence of almighty God, the glorious hierarchy of angels, and the noble society of just men made perfect. Oh fatal day to me, that ever I was born, but how much more unlucky was that hour, when I entered into covenant with the devil ! I had a fore-taste of this wrath, when I lived on earth, and the same witness, that now accuses me, reproves

ed me at that time ; I might have arrived safe at Zion, with less trouble, than where I am at this instant ; for what fruits had I in those things, whereof I am now ashamed ? Oh ! miserable caitiff that I am, how shall I undergo the fury of my great creator, or endure the vials of his wrath poured out upon me ! Yet the absence of my offended God is more bitter than death itself, and his displeasure more racking than the torments of hell. I that once had an opportunity of becoming the companion of celestial cherubins, and righteous persons made forever happy, am now forced to keep company with infernal fiends and damned spirits made eternally miserable : I who might have solaced myself under the divine rays of the most glorious son of righteousness, and might have discerned the height, breadth, length, and depth of his transcendent love, must now stumble on the dark mountains of eternity,

“ O my soul, what a dismal veil is spread on all sides between thee and the divine glory; a thick darkness that will never be succeeded by the dawn of another day; a black cloud that will never clear up to brightness; a spacious curtain of despair, that will never be drawn up to display the scenes of joy! Here thou must wander up and down the gloomy regions, from one age to another; here thou shalt seek for death with groans, but shall never find it; and wish to be reduced to nothing, but all to no purpose; here thou must forever range about in this infectious air, continually lamenting thy irreversible sentence, and crying out with bitter complaints, in this howling wilderness of desperation. Alas, the longer I wish to be released the more I may; here I shall always weep, but no tears can atone for my past offences! Oh what a dreadful abyss is this, where all my light is changed into darkness, all my joys into sorrow,

all my smiles into frowns, all my mirth into grief, all jollity into madness, all my ease into pain, all my hope into despair, all my love into hatred, all my peace and tranquility into a woful hurricane of confusions, and all my assurance into a certainty of enduring endless torments. What fearful dungeon is this, that sin has cast me into, where no screeches can be heard, no prayers answered, no compassion found, no God to pity, no Christ to save, no holy spirit to comfort, no hope of relief, and no year of jubilee for the releasing of enslaved captives ! Here I must lie without redemption, lamenting my wretched state, till the judgment of the great and terrible day, when my amazed body will arise out of the dry dust of the earth to be reunited to this forlorn soul, and to continue its inseparable companion in the suffering of everlasting pains.”

Such a dismal meeting as this will one day, cause the devils themselves to quake and tremble, as being sensible, that their tortures will be augmented to the highest degree of misery : Oh what a horrid out-cry will there be, when the distracted spirits of the damned come in crowds to salute their old associates in debauchery ! But the lamentations and howlings will be more hideous, when all the numerous millions of souls and bodies standing at the left hand of Christ the supreme judge, shall be condemned to the lake of fire and brimstone, where the scorching flames of a wounded conscience, will roar like the thunder of the almighty, and the smoke of their torments ascend up forever ; not such a smoke as arises from a material fire, but that of God's fiery indignation, which will always burn to torture the infernal fiends ; and never be quenched : for were God to turn away his fury from those wretched



miscreants, their pains would immediately cease; since that, and that only, is the proper fuel which feed those intolerable flames; or were God to lift up the light of his countenance, or to show his presence to those perplexed spirits, the borders of hell would shine as bright as the gates of heaven; but it is inconsistent with his divine justice, that any such glimpse of his favour should be darted into that bottomless pit of utter despair.

Therefore it may be avouched for certain, that there is no other fire in hell for the punishment of the damned, but what proceeds from the displeasure of and absense of the most glorious supreme being, with the guilt of their own wilful crimes and notorious trangressions. Alas! The affliction is sufficiently great to be banished from the enjoyment of the chiefest good to eternal ages; as it will farther appear by reflecting a little on this familiar instance: what a dreadful dark-

ness would overspread the surface of the earth, if the sun, moon and stars should withdraw their light, and all the other comforts of this life should be removed from us, so as never to return again ! What confusion should we all be in, how should we wander about those dark regions, in hopes of finding some relief amongst our neighbours and friends, or others at a more remote distance ! But when we come to understand that the same had befallen all the rest of mankind, how disconsolate would our condition appear, how should we despair of succour, and look upon ourselves as utterly undone ! Now if such a temporary withdrawing of God's mercies in this lower world, would occasion so great a terror, what must the astonishment then be, to have a sense of being banished from his glorious presence to all eternity in the other life ?

In that miserable state, the damned will incessantly weep, roar, and gnash

with their teeth, in the extreme horror and anguish of their souls, to see themselves deprived of all hope of mercy ; and their passions will be raised to the highest pitch of fury : there those distracted spirits will entertain a mutual enmity and strive to enhance their own misery, branding one another in the fiery transports of rage, with their former crimes and enormities : there lewd subjects will inveigh with bitter execrations against their vicious prince, for giving them so bad an example ; there a careless auditor that was not willing to receive the word of God, with sincerity of heart, will loudly exclaim against those scandalous teachers that preached one doctrine in their pulpits, and acted another in their lives and conversations : there undutiful children will fly in the faces of their cruel parents, who suffered them to run headlong in their folly, without giving them due correction ; there unfaithful servants, will wring

their hands and shake their heads at their ungracious masters and governors, who never took care to perform their duty to God, or to those that were committed to their charge.

There profane gazers at all sorts of stage-plays, as tragedies, farces, comedies, drolls, mountebanks, shows, &c. will all spit their fiery venom, at those blasphemous actors and buffoons, that played the devil's part on the lascivious theatres; there impure minds that took great delight in reading licentious discourses, will vilify those audacious wretches, who mis-spent so much of their precious time in writing such vain romances, that served for no other purpose, but to corrupt the age, and bring so numerous a crowd of poor deluded people to that dreadful place of confusion; there the genteel compliant lady of pleasure will storm and outrageously assault those that used all their wits to debauch her mind with unchaste desires, which proved so fa-

tal, and reduced them to the utmost extremity of misery : There they that were enticed to the committing of enormous crimes, will belch forth unspeakable reproaches against those swarms of tempters, that ran about the world on satan's errands, and were his chief agents ; there the drunkard will be incensed against his old pot-companions : there one villain will abhor another for their former consultations in the black art. With such cruel revilings, opprobrious terms, and bitter taunts, these wretched miscreants will be continually galling one another, to the everlasting extent of a dismal night, that will always be gliding on, but never come near a day of refreshment.

These are some of my serious thoughts and reflections upon what will unavoidably attend all persons in this world and that which is to come, who wilfully desert the service of the great God, or that live and die in the prac-

tice of any known sin, or in the contempt of his just commands, without the true marks of an unfeigned repentance ; such as does not proceed from a slavish fear, but such as is the effect of love, and of a hearty sorrow for having offended so gracious and bountiful a creator. So that upon the whole matter, my opinion is, that no man under those circumstances can be capable of adoring the deity after a due manner in this world, or of contemplating the divine perfections in the future state ; in regard that by continuing in a sinful course, he apparently forfeits so glorious a privilege : therefore it is not God that excludes him from his favour here, or his most comfortable presence hereafter, but his own wilful obstinacy ; for the arms of the divine clemency are ever stretched out to embrace all penitent sinners, that humbly throw themselves into them, through the merits of their blessed redeemer ; and I am persuaded, that all those that reject these

kind offers of love, would persist in sinning to eternity, if their life were to be of that duration.

Then it plainly appears to be only a piece of most equitable justice, that such persons should live for ever in that state they have courted so long, and merited by their obstinate rebellion ; for if God should admit them into his kingdom, they would meet with nothing there, that is agreeable to their corrupt nature and vicious inclinations ; neither would it answer the purpose of so wise and just a sovereign being. However if these wretches could be persuaded to inure themselves by degrees to the contemplation of the divine attributes, and the admirable excellencies of the ever blessed trinity, they would soon find a sweet fore-taste of the celestial joys, in the present state of life ; but the natural aversion they have for purity, is so unaccountably great, that they had rather make a mock of sin,

and all that is sacred, than seriously set about the performance of so important a duty.

To conclude, I shall endeavour farther to illustrate the proceedings of divine justice, by a familiar instance ; suppose a combination of disloyal subjects should plot together to vilify one of the most powerful princes in the world, so far as to break the just laws of his government, to expose the person of his sacred majesty to scorn and contempt, to alienate the minds of the people from their obedience, and actually to cause a revolt within his dominions : suppose likewise the clemency of this potentate should be so singular, as to order a proclamation to be set forth, offering a free pardon to all those that lay down the arms of rebellion, and come in at a certain time appointed ; but they obstinately refused to submit upon these gracious terms, would you not entertain the



greatest veneration for such a monarch, and look upon that pestilent swarm of vipers as more fit to dwell in a loathsome dungeon, than to be cherished with the favour of so generous a prince, who had so freely offered forgiveness to such traitors.

“The case stands thus” said I to my friend, “between almighty God and vicious men ; and at the last day, such will be obliged to own their folly, and to confess, that God is most just and righteous in all his dealings with mankind. I added, that if by what had been delivered, the misery of the wicked in this life and in the future state, did not apper to be of their own seeking, all the arguments in the world, would be of no force for his conviction.” Whereupon he answered, “I had indeed produced so many fair proofs, especially such as were confirmed by my own experience, in the above mentioned remarkable particu-

lars, that he was almost convinced of the divine justice in the punishment of the wicked; so that he would take the matter into serious consideration, and give me a satisfactory answer in a few months;" but I heard no farther of him, till he received his last summons to appear before the dreadful tribunal of the great God, when my company and advice seemed to be very acceptable to him. It would be too tedious to recite all the discourses that passed between us during the time of his sickness; so that I shall content myself only to repeat the chief articles of them, and what may more directly tend to the readers advantage; it being my friend's particular desire that they should be printed for the edification of others; not doubting but by this means many souls would be brought to the belief of a God, and to disclaim all sorts of Atheistical principles.

However, I think it expedient to conceal the name of this ingenious gen-

tleman, in regard that he descended of a noble and religious family, and there are several others of the same name, who may be apt to resent it as an indignity. Besides he committed such sins as ought not to be retained in the memory of his old companions, or of any that knew him : for the whole course of his life was so irregular, and disagreeable to the divine precepts. that I had much rather bury his faults in oblivion, than transmit them upon record to future ages. His natural parts and endowments of mind were so extraordinary, that they rendered his conversation agreeable to persons of the highest rank and quality ; his discourses were so polite and pleasant, that they charmed the ears of those that heard them ; and few ever attained to greater perfection in the art of speaking : but when his arguments were levelled against scripture and reason, they were easily confuted, as the most part of Athiests generally are ;

for I am fully persuaded, they argue contrary to their own sentiments, stiffly opposing that truth which they cannot but be convinced of in their own breast ; as plainly appears, when they come to take their last farewell of a vain world, on which they have so long doated, and are ready to launch out into the bottomless ocean of eternity.

This gentleman believed he should die at the first beginning of his sickness, and I was with him every day, for the space of three or four hours, as long as it continued, that is to say, about five or six weeks ; during which time, through the divine mercy, he had his senses preserved in a wonderful manner, except some small intervals of frenzy, occasioned by the violence of his distemper. I came first to him on the second day of his indisposition, when he expressed his great joy to see so old an acquaintance and dear a friend, as he was pleased to call me. I

asked him “how he did, and what made him so dejected: since I took him to be of a greater spirit, than to be startled at such slight symptoms as then appeared?”

“Alas!” Said he, “are you so void of understanding, as to imagine I am afraid to die? far be such thoughts from me; I could meet death with as much courage, as I have encountered an enemy in the field of battle, and embrace it as freely, as I ever did any friend whom I entirely loved: for I see nothing in this world that is worth the pains of keeping. I have made trial of most states and conditions of life; I have continued at home for a considerable time, and travelled abroad in foreign parts; I have been rich and poor; I have been raised to honour and revered in a high degree; I have also been exposed to scorn and contempt; I have been wise and foolish; I have experienced the difference between

virtue and vice, and every thing that was possible for a man in my station ; so that I am capable of distinguishing what is really good and praise-worthy, and what is not : now I see with a clearer sight than ever, and discern a vast difference between the vain licentious discourse of a libertine, and the sound arguments of a true believer : for though the former may express himself more finely than the latter, so as to puzzle him with hard questions and intricate notions, yet all amounts to no more, than the fallacy of a few airy repartees, which are never affected by sober christians, nor capable to elude the force of solid reasons : but now I know how to make a distinction between them ; and I wish from the bottom of my heart, I had been so sensible of my error in the time of my health ; then I had never had those dreadful fore-tastes of hell I now have : oh what a sad account have I to give of a long

life spent in sin and folly! I look beyond the fears of a temporal death ; all the dread that you perceive in me, arises from the near approach I make to an eternal death ; for I must die, to live to all eternity.”

Having heard these surprizing expressions, I was extremely transported with the contrary passions of joy and fear, and these affections were raised to such an equal height, that I could not perceive for a while which would get the mastery ; for I was so well pleased with the sight of such a sudden reformation in so great a sinner, and at the same time so much startled at his despairing of salvation, that I was not able to make any reply for the present ; but upon mature deliberation, I answered him to this effect :

“ My real and affectionate friend, whose peace and happiness I value at so high a rate, that I could part with all that is dear to me in this world, so

that I might by any means be instrumental in the saving of thy precious soul in the day of the Lord Jesus, what transports of joy could I express, to see such a glorious change, which I hope will speedily turn the fierceness of God's wrathful indignation against thee, into pity here, and mercy hereafter. Why are your spirits cast down, and why do you show the marks of despondency? Prostrate thyself before the mercy seat of thy almighty creator, and rely on him with a perfect trust; for though a late repentance is very doubtful, yet there is sufficient ground of hope, if it be sincere. Let me request this of you, seriously to examine the state of your soul, and to see how accounts stand between God and your conscience: disperse all those black and melancholy thoughts, that strike a terror into your mind, and seem to fill you so full of amazement. You are



sensible, that despair is a fore-taste of hell, and one of the devil's engines, by the means of which he makes sure of those that adhere to him, and induces them to cast off all hope of salvation; for I firmly believe, FRANCIS SPIRA and many other desponding souls might have been glorified saints in heaven, if they could have relied on God's infinite mercy. Therefore let me entreat thee for Christ's sake, and for the love of thy own immortal soul, stedfastly to believe, that there is a sufficient quantity of blood in that fountain of life, to cleanse thee from all thy pollutions. I hope the horror that seems to overwhelm thy spirits does not proceed from a panic fear of hell, but from a reflection, that thou hast offended God, in the breaking of his just laws and ordinances."

As soon as I had made an end of speaking, the gentleman burst forth into tears intermixed with sighs and

groans, and said, “ why do you discover so great a love for my soul, as to be so tender of my salvation, in regard you know the vanity of my former life, and may call to mind how many discourses I made with you against a future state? Take no pity of me, who had no compassion of myself; for how happy might I have been if I had acted conformably to the rules of the holy scriptures, and had made religion my sure guide. It was not that I disbelieved the being of a God, a divine providence, a heaven and hell, but I would not have it so, because the course of my life was so repugnant to such principles; for alas! There is nothing we see or converse with, but plainly discovers a supreme being; so that when at any time I have discoursed with others of my own persuasion, I have perceived such incoherent absurdities, in their several disputes against a Deity, as have

often made me suspect, they have argued contrary to their own judgments :

“ I have also observed, that when such men came to leave this world, they have been in a strange confusion, not knowing what to plead for themselves ; and when at any time the devil incited me to believe, that this effect was only produced by the violence of their distemper, or the suggestion of some priest, I could not be reconciled to that belief, by reason that I have found the senses of those persons more apprehensive and quick at such a time than at any other. I have seen many others in perfect health, in a terrible consternation and anxiety of mind, not so much for the loss of their friends, as the danger they apprehended in a future state, which appeared to me as one of the strongest proofs of the being of a God ; and then I considered, if any of them died in despair, what would be the occasion of

it, but the fearful apprehensions of a future judgment.

“Such thoughts as these often took deep impression in my mind, but now I find the certainty of what I then doubted. Oh wretched and uncomfortable state of sin, the source of all my miseries ; the object of all that is evil ! How happy might I have been, if I had freed myself from the snares of the devil ; how calm and serene would all my thoughts have been, how sweet and pleasant my repose ; how delightful might I have spent the flower of my age, in the unerring paths of virtue, where I might have used the innocent recreations of life, without the least dissatisfaction of mind, or remorse of conscience ? But how did satan hurry me on, from one act of sin to another, interrupting my peace, and depriving me of that tranquility of mind, which is only capable of bringing human nature to real happiness ! Oh that I had been removed out of

all the storms and hurricanes of vice, and placed amidst the gentle breezes of humility! Oh that I had escaped those dangerous snares that so easily entrapped me, and had walked on without any disturbance, in the direct road of integrity; how steadily might I have steered my course through this turbulent world, if holiness of life, and purity of conversation, had freighted my empty vessel, in its short voyage to eternity!

“ Oh that I had retired to my closet, and there spent my precious time in performing private devotions, free from the bustle and hurry of a thousand allurements that draw the unthinking multitude into folly! Oh the most comfortable sweetness of such a delightful retirement, during which I might have had the supreme deity my familiar companion, and the divine expressions of holy writ my sole discourse! In this happy solitude, I might have learnt the whole duty of man,

and been thoroughly instructed in all the principles of christian perfection ; there I might have been made sensible, that the study of attaining to divine wisdom, is the only means to preserve a soul in the state of innocency, and to secure it from impure pollutions ; there I might have raised my dull thoughts to the highest pitch of sublime meditation, and made humble suit to the court of heaven seven times a day, with fervent prayers and supplications : then I might have freely conversed with my sovereign creator, and called upon him to be my chiefest aid in the day of adversity : then I might have had a good plea to put in at the bar of the great tribunal, when the supreme judge of heaven and earth, shall sit on the throne of his glory, ready to pass sentence on the just and the unjust, and to make retribution to all men, according to their works.”

Then I replied, “ sir, I plainly perceive, there is no longer any need of proving to you the being of a God, or the certianty of a future state, and that you are now come to be of my opinion, that there is no real Atheist in the world, though there are many practical ones. I cannot express how great a satisfaction it is to me, that you have saved yourself and me the trouble of any further disputes on this article, which might have taken up much of the short time of your life that is now left, and would prove a main obsticle to your salvation, as I fear it has happened with respect to many, who have spent the greater part of their last minutes in such conferences, that might have tended much more to the edifing of themselves and others, in the time of their health, than in the last few days of their sickness; for I can discern but small hope of salvation, when a man leaves the world, disput-

ing about the essence or attributes of almighty God his sovereign creator.

“Therefore I would advise all christians, never to engage themselves in such dangerous disputations, when they come within a few days journey of the grave, and it is my earnest request to all ministers, as far as it lays in their power, to decline the holding of such controversies with them, in their last extremity ; since that is the most proper time to perform all acts of faith, by rehearsing the articles of their creed, stedfastly believing the divine revelation, and yielding an absolute assent to his holy will and commandments, without the least wavering: for if a dying person has faith, what need is there of any further disputes? If not, there is no salvation to be expected ; in regard that it is plainly expressed in holy scripture, ‘ that he that believes shall be saved, and he that does not shall be damned :’ not but that it is very necessary that such



points should be handled and discussed thoroughly in due season by all orders and degrees of men, by which means they may be made capable to confirm themselves in the true faith, and to maintain it against the unreasonable cavils of Atheists and libertines ; but a person in a dying condition, will find it a sufficiently hard task, to withstand the fiery darts and furious assaults of the devil in his last agony ; so as to be obliged to cry out with the utmost earnestness and ardency of spirit, lord I believe, help thou my unbelief.

“This I hope, sir, will be your main business, while these few sands are running out of your almost empty glass : let me entreat you to lay aside all thoughts of those disputes you ever had with me or any others against the being or justice of God ; but seriously reflect on those weighty reasons that were so powerful as to confute your former arguments, and assure yourself, that God, who is just in the pu-

nishing of vain disputers, will extend the arms of his infinite mercy to you, if you sincerely repent of all your enormous sins and transgressions, with a due abhorrence and detestation ; believing that he is able and willing to save you, one of the greatest sinners. I do not think it expedient, that during our conferences, we should answer each other word for word, as is usual in other cases, except where there is occasion for the resolving of any doubts or scruples ; in regard that such a particular method of discoursing, would not now prove very beneficial to you, or be suitable to your present circumstances ; this not being a convenient season for long discourses, but a short space of time to be prudently spent in making a due preparation for your great change.

“ Then let me exhort you, good sir, to lay aside all despairing thoughts, that may discompose the temper of your mind, and consider what tempta-

tions you are to grapple with in this your last encounter with the enemy of your soul; fight manfully under Christ's standard; summon up all the strength of grace; improve your faith and patience; argue judiciously against the apparent terrors of the divine judgments; and muse not too much on what you might have been, but consider what you may be, if you gain this last victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil: survey every part of your soul, and observe carefully where it is chiefly exposed to danger; then make all safe and secure, by prayers and tears, by using sound arguments and keeping a diligent watch. There are indeed many temptations that may seem very difficult to be overcome, in this your first entrance on a religious course; nevertheless trust in God, and I doubt not but through the merits of the ever-blessed Jesus, you may at last prove victorious, and triumphantly enter upon the state of everlasting bliss."

The gentleman returned an answer to this effect, “ I am in a straight between hope and despair, justice and mercy, sometimes I entertain a pleasing thought of God’s favours, and at others dread his vengeance against me the vilest of sinners. O cursed day, in which I blasphemously disputed against the being of God, the remembrance of those Atheistical arguments make deep wounds in my soul, and gall my conscience to the quick, upon the sad reflection, that I should so preposterously argue against the dictates of my own natural reason. Oh that I could summon, before the tribunal of a free conscience all those pretended Atheists that range about like so many noxious serpents to dart their venom into the purest thoughts, and make it their whole business to render others as profane as themselves : I could now put them to silence by undeniable demonstrations, and convince them by my own woful experience ; then they

might plainly perceive how much I abhor their vain notions, which I formerly took upon me to maintain, and that I am not crazed or distracted, as some of them may report me to be, when I am laid low in the cold grave, and cannot rise to answer for myself: let them seriously peruse these my last dying discourses, comparing them with the former, and they will soon discern which are most agreeable to sound reason.

“ I am now free to declare my sentiments, without fear or shame, without bribery or partiality, without flattery or reserve. I have a witness within my own breast that cannot lie, or bring in a false verdict; an upright judge that determines according to true matter of fact; a vigilant conscience that will not be lulled asleep: time was, when I refused to hear its charms, charmed it never so sweetly, but now I give attentive heed to its prudent dictates; although it makes a dreadful noise like

the roaring of a lion, and fills me with horror and amazement ; yet its fury may be much more tolerably endured now, than to all eternity ; but I fear I became sensible of its checks too late : how happy might I have been, had I in due time, entertained the sage advice of so true a friend ! Oh fatal hour to me, when I stifled its strongest convictions, and would hearken to none of its reproofs ! How often was I warned by that faithful monitor, to pray by day and contemplate by night ! Then no anxious fears about a future state, would have seized on my drooping soul in the time of my greatest peril. I am now very sensible, that serious considerations is the most sure promoter of true wisdom, temperance the best physic, and a good conscience the noblest inheritance ; nay had I a thousand worlds at my disposal, I could freely part with all, for that most radiant Jewel of inestimable value.

“ I cannot but call to mind a few admirable expressions upon this subject, uttered by an excellent personage in the time of his health : “ The testimony of a good conscience, said he, is more precious to me than ten thousand tunns of gold and silver; for what is all the treasures of the world, if I am deprived of peace in my own breast? By the serenity of my mind, and the innocency of my life, I enjoy a perfect freedom, from all the guilt, that ever and anon arises from the rancour of an ulcerated conscience : I have endured, continued he, the pains of the latter for some time, but now I find inexpressible transports of pleasure, that arise from the other; so that were there no future state to reward the virtuous or to punish the vicious, yet I daily meet with such delectable streams continually flowing from the sweet springs of religion, that I had much rather choose humility and an exem-

plary holiness of conversation, in the meanest garb, than Atheism and profaneness in their purple robes of state: for I now retain a perfect tranquility of mind, void of all despairing thoughts that used to give it so much disturbance, and am quite freed from those slavish fears that pursue wicked men in all their private retirements: therefore I will have frequent recourse to prayer and divine meditation, regulating all my actions according to the exact model of virtue, and directing my course through the turbulent sea of this world, by the infallible compass of truth, that will certainly convey me safe to the desired haven, where all storms will cease, and be succeeded by the refreshing gales of everlasting rest."

Hereupon I took an opportunity to insinuate to my sick friend. "That there could not be a more notable mark of a true convert, than a real detestation of all the follies of youth



with a sincere desire of reclaiming others as well as himself; which divine principles I perceived was so ingrafted in his nature, since the time of his visitation, that I doubted not but before he laid down this tabernacle of clay, he would find as sweet a fore-taste of a good conscience, as that worthy person whom he had but now mentioned." Then I proceeded in my discourse to him, in the following terms, "take care to steer your course in the same channel wherein this able pilot, whom you have produced as an example is gone before; never doubting in the least, but you may arrive at the same harbour of peace and tranquility; and though your voyage may be but short, yet your vessel may be as well freighted for eternal rest, as any other whatsoever. Meditate a while on what happened to the penitent thief on the cross, who no sooner believed but was saved: go into Christ's vineyard, and see your dear redeemer bestowing the

same reward on poor lazy wretches, who had been gazing about, in an idle posture, till the sun was ready to set, and began to labour in the cool of the evening, only for the space of one single hour, as on those that had borne the fatigue of a toilsome day : hark, what triumphing there is in the New Jerusalem above, at the conversion of one vain offender, and what acclamations of joy the careful shepherd makes, upon the finding of his one lost sheep out of the number of an hundred : do but think of the woman that searched every corner of the house, in quest after her lost piece of silver, till having at last fortunately lighted upon it, she run out into the streets, and with great exultation called her friends and neighbours together, saying rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost.

“Therefore my beloved friend, let me entreat thee to cry out earnestly, with the prodigal son, to the eternal father

of spirits, father I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy child: fly speedily to the rock of protection, for refuge, and he will most graciously open his outstretched arms, to take thee into his sweet embraces; look steadfastly on the map of faith, and thou shalt find the situation of paradise exactly delineated; rehearse the articles of thy creed, with christian magnanimity; receive the supper of thy dying Lord, with meekness and thanksgiving; survey the shore of eternal rest, with an accurate circumspection, so shalt thou find means to avoid those dangerous rocks and quick-sands, that the storms of a wounded spirit may drive thee upon: enter into a solemn covenant with that true religion, which will secure thy sinking soul from the dreadful abyss of utter destruction; reflect a little on the life of St. Augustine that pious Bishop of

Hippa, so as to abhor the follies of his youth, but to retain the sincerity of his true conversion ; strive earnestly to unite thy soul to God, by acts of faith, with an absolute recumbency upon his gracious promises, and an entire resignation to his divine will : to conclude, prepare thyself for a longer life , or a speedy death, and let all thy inordinate desires and corrupt inclinations be suddenly dispersed like the morning clouds, when the bright rays of a rising sun begin to gild the tops of the Western hills.

“ It cannot be improper or unreasonable, here to produce the wholesome advice given to this purpose by a certain heathen philosopher, who said, “ make it no longer a matter of dispute what are marks and signs of a virtuous person, but immediately set about it, and endeavour to become such a one.” Then let me beseech thee by all that is sacred, to be ready to sa-

crifice thy life and every thing else that is most dear to thee in this world, rather than offend God for the future, in thought, word or deed ; never give way to those base temptations that may draw thy serious thoughts from depending on the infinite goodness of thy omnipotent and all-sufficient creator ; lay thy sins open before him, and show him of thy trouble ; pour out thy complaint to him in the anguish of thy spirit, and meekly plead at the bar of his mercy, for the assistance of his saving grace.

“Then I doubt not, but the great God Jehovah will enrich thy precious soul with the dew of divine inspiration, and ingraft in thy mind that knowledge which passes all understanding ; to the end that all the acts of thy death-bed repentance may be so real and sincere in every particular, as there may be nothing to startle or terrify thee in that last minute when the clammy sweats of death will besmear

all the parts of thy chill body, when thy eyes begin to close, and thy pulse beats with the slowest motion ; when thy feet are cold, and the knuckles of thy fingers begin to grow stiff and crooked, God grant that all thy prayers and tears, sighs and dying groans may be crowned with a well grounded hope of everlasting glory in the heavenly mansions ; where angels sing aloud the praises of their great creator, and all the sons of God are filled with endless joy : So that when you have taken your ultimate farewell of this frail tabernacle of mouldering clay, all that survive may peruse these your last essays with raptures of admiration, at the sight of so glorious a change in the morals of a professed Atheist : who can tell, but that your real conversion may promote the salvation of many souls in the great day of account ; and you must needs be sensible, that they that are instrumental in the bringing of many straglers in the by-path of

sin to the straight road of righteousness, shall shine as the stars for evermore, and move in the highest sphere of the emperal orbs ; but if you depart this life with a mistrust of the divine mercy, your case may be for ever desperate, and your loss irrecoverable.”

The gentleman replied, “ that my reasonings were accompanied with so strong conviction, that were he in perfect health and sure to survive the funeral of the universe, he should be persuaded to abdicate all sensual pleasures, and to entertain those saving truths that bring so great delight and satisfaction of mind, as must needs excite such an ardent affection for a holy life, as not to be willing to be divested of it for all the profits of a sinful course.

“ Now” said he,” I look upon religion as a sure guide to heaven, and the sovereign dispenser of human felicity ; whose ways are smooth and

straight, and all her paths are peace and assurance forever ; her discourses are incomparably pleasant and charming ; her votaries full of generous zeal and virtue. The practitioners in this noble science of piety, never fall out by the way, about indifferent matters, nor go about to excuse their own neglects, or extenuate their faults ; but are the same in their private retirements, as in their public stations : they pray in secret with the same alacrity and sedateness of mind, as in the house of God : they are always intent upon hearing the word of truth in ardency of affection and singleness of heart, without the least tincture of hypocrisy or haughtiness of spirit ; not coveting to be seen or taken notice of by men, but to be approved of by their great creator, whose divine commandments they well know to be most useful and advantageous in the present state of life, even though there were no other to be expected : they are



sensible, that it is sincerity which recommends them to the favour of God and man, and settles such an everlasting peace in their own breast, that neither the malice of devils nor damned spirits shall ever be able to deprive them of it; they believe they were sent into the world for no other purpose, but to praise the sovereign Lord of it some time here on earth, and to be made capable of enjoying him forever in heaven.

“ Then by the assistance of his holy spirit, I will spend the short remains of my life in so religious an exercise, that I may not be startled at that fatal hour which I find coming on apace, by the sensible decays of nature; let none of my friends be afraid of telling of me the truth: for I perceive it is high time to double my guard, and put all in a posture of defence; I see the king of terrors is making his near approach, and ready to lance his keen

javelin into my trembling heart ; I see my friends begin to despair, and the room in which I lay imitates the shades of death, so that when a few days more are passed, I shall be, as if I never had any being in this world. Now I believe in the Lord Jesus, Lord help my unbelief ! O blessed God, have no regard to my former errors, but graciously pardon the unfaithfulness of my past life ; now I am ready to rehearse the articles of my Christian faith, and to prepare for eating that divine bread, and drinking that aromatic wine, in remembrance of what was done for me. Oh that I had longer to live in this world, that I might do and suffer more for the son of God, who left his farther's kingdom to redeem vile sinners, of whom I am chief !

“ Lord thou knowest, that Thomas thine apostle, called in question the truth of thy resurrection, and would not be persuaded to believe, till he had

thrust his hand into thy wounded side, and saw the prints of the nails in thy sacred hands and feet ; nevertheless, thou had'st compassion on his infirmity, and brought him to the full belief of what he before doubted. Lord, I stedfastly believe thy birth, life, crucifixion, death, burial, decension into hell, resurrection, ascension into heaven, and thy future glorious coming again at the last great and terrible day, when the Archangel's trump will sound, the dead arise, and all the primitive generations that have laid asleep in the dust of the earth, and deep of the sea for many thousands of years, will force open the iron-gates of their prisons, and come forth to see the meaning of so strange a revolution ; when the poles of the globe of the universe, will cease to bear their weight, and the elements will melt with fervent heat ; when all mankind then living, will be suddenly translated, and summoned to

stand amidst the numerous croud at the bar of the supreme tribunal, there to receive with the rest of their brethren, a final sentence, pronounced by the just judge of heaven and earth. I believe that the righteous shall for ever reign in the celestial kingdom, but the profane will lurk under the dark clouds of everlasting despair, calling to the rocks to cover and protect them from the fury of almighty vengeance ; all these amazing truths, I as firmly believe as if they now appeared before my eyes.

“ O Lord, I beseech thee, remember not how vain I have been, or how vile I am in myself, but bathe my soul in that inexhaustible fountain of blood, which flowed from thy gaping wounds when thou did'st vouchsafe to hang on the tormenting cross, to atone for my transgressions: Lord, thou hast waded through streams of blood, being set forth by thy eternal father, to be a pro-

pitiation, for the sins of those that rely  
 on thee for salvation ; I am come to  
 survey the field in which thou was  
 betrayed, and to walk in the garden  
 where thou did'st sweat great drops of  
 blood ; I will run directly to thy cross,  
 and behold that dreadful and astonish-  
 ingspectacle ; diligently observing what  
 wounds the perfidious Jews made on  
 thy sacred body ; I will view the crown  
 of thorns that encircled thy divine  
 temples, and launched thy refulgent  
 head, till the blood trickled down  
 over all the parts of thy most preci-  
 ous body : Lord, I had rather choose  
 to die than to deny thee again,  
 which was a failing in Peter, one of  
 the most eminent of thy apostles : al-  
 though my sins be of a crimson-dye,  
 nevertheless thou can'st make them  
 as white as snow ; and although they be  
 as red as scarlet yet thou can'st cleanse  
 them till they appear as pure as wool.

“ If I perish, it shall be at the pool of Bethesda, or at the throne of thy grace, sweet Jesu ! Where as vile sinners as myself have been received into the ark of thy ineffable love : O cast me not away from thee, but take me into thy favour whatever may happen, come life, come death, I will show my zeal for thy name to future ages, and free myself from all impure imaginations ; holiness and righteousness shall adorn my soul to the utmost period of life : though legions of infernal friends and despairing thoughts may encompass me on all sides, and lay close seige to the fort of my hope, nevertheless I will rally all my broken forces, and never suffer myself to be drawn away from thy protection ; for I already feel my languid spirits reviving, and know there is help at hand. Blessed redeemer, thou did'st not descend from the bosom of thy eternal father into this vale of misery to save the righteous,

but to call sinners to repentance ; thou did'st not appear to fight the battle for the potent, but to assist, succour, and defend the weak : Lord, here is need of thy help, this is a work fit for thy hand, and thy mighty arm ; O come quickly, here are legions of temptations in battel-array ; all are striving who shall gain the victory over my fainting soul ; Lord, I am full of wounds, and in a forlorn condition, so that if thou do'st not speedily come in with fresh recruits, I shall sink under the oppression of my enemies, and swoon away at the foot-stool of thy mercy

“O most gracious Saviour, refresh my drooping spirit by the admirable virtue of this consecrated bread and wine, and let my languishing soul be so far revived by thy immediate presence, as to be enabled to gain the final battel against those three numerous armies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, that are now so powerful in their last assault : Lord, give me victory

now or never ; this is the fatal stroke that must inevitably fall on one side or the other ; on this critical juncture of time, depends a crown of glory, or everlasting chains of darkness ; my good or bad success in this dangerous encounter, will be attended with an eternity of joy or misery. O blessed Lord, remember not the follies of my youth, nor the sins of my dissolute course of life ; neither call to mind my notorious unbelief, but let the prayers and tears which are now put up for me by thy faithful servants, make a sufficient atonement through thy infinite merits for all my past offences and transgressions, so that iniquity may not prove my utter ruin." The penitent gentleman had no sooner concluded his discourse, but I told him, "I perceived the frame of his heart melted with such real contrition and Godly sorrow for all his former miscarriages and failings, that I had reason to believe he had overcome the wicked one ; but for-



asmuch as there was little hope of his continuance here, I exhorted him to be faithful to the last gasp, since by that means and no other, he might expect to gain a crown of life. And although the trial of his love to God and religion, was of so short duration, nevertheless I judged it to be real and cordial; so that I firmly believed had he a longer space of time allowed him in this world, he would spend it in obedience to the divine commandments: I added that almighty God knew the secret intentions of his heart, as well as he himself, and if he were unfeignedly resolved for his service, whether he was ordained for life or death, the same infinitely merciful God, would accept of his sincere, though late repentance, and receive him as kindly into his glorious Kingdom, as if his days had been taken up with a long series of religious exercises, and noble actions."

I also admonished him to consider, how happy an hour that was when God

wrought so wonderful a change in in him. O fortunate mistake (said I) when you lost the way to the city of destruction, and fell into the road that leads to *Sion* ; O love that holy guide, who took so much pains in ordering thy foot-steps in those blessed paths, and has now conducted thee to the borders of everlasting bliss. Do but make one reflection upon the whole matter, that it is not the power of a frail man, but of an omnipotent God, that has brought about this great change ; and and for your farther encouragement, I shall expose to your view, the noble prize for which you are fighting, striving and running, and that is no less than an immarcessible diadem of glory, a most resplendent crown that never fades nor loses its lustre ; a most delightful country, where when you are once safe arrived, there are no craggy rocks to be climbed, no barren deserts to be passed over, no ambuscades to surprize, no free-booters to

rob, nor fears to terrify; no race to be run, no enemies to be encountered, nor sin to be dreaded, no ravenous beasts to devour, no serpents to bite, nor scorpions to sting, no rivers to be forded, nor storms to be weathered; no thunder to amaze, nor winds to freeze, nor sun to scorch; no thirst to be quenched, no hunger to be satisfied, nor night to be spent in irksome watchings; no unruly appetites to be subdued, no fatigues to be undergone, nor pains to be felt.

“In those blisful mansions, you will rest from all your labours, and your troubles will for ever cease; there every moment will produce various scenes of content; and all the joys will be continually blooming; so as to refresh your soul with streams of new pleasures: there you will walk through those glorious streets of the *new Jerusalem*, all paved with oriental pearls of inestimable value, and see those spaci-

plains, whose flowery meadows are always fragrant and green, and whose pleasing walks will afford you fresh delights ; there you may solace yourself under the shade of stately trees of life, the healing leaves of which sends forth such aromatic breezes, that every branch does as it were laugh and sing, and their everlasting verdure is maintained, by the consant supplies, their impregnated roots receive from those crystal-floods *that make glad the city of God*, in whose delightful presence will appear, incomparable beauties of glorified saints, that would eclipse the rays of an eastern sun, though it may rise never so bright above our finite horizon, and shine with the greatest splendor.

“ There you will be continually employed in contemplating with most profound respect, the infinite goodness of the great God, in bringing you to so glorious a place, where everlasting

Hallelujahs and praises are sung to the Lamb that was slain for the redemption of offending sinners. There you will be transported with raptures of admiration of that providential care which preserved you in this your last extremity, and rescued you from the clutches of those thousands of evil spirits, that were incessantly waiting for your departure : Oh with what arduency will you bless the Lord, praise him and magnify him forever, for protecting and securing you from the malice of those infernal legions, that not only darkened but also infected the air in which you breathed ! There you will find, that the virtuous acts of a sincere repentance, are entirely owing to the auspicious smiles of heaven, for which inestimable benefit, you will reverently adore the ever blessed triune Godhead, when time shall enter in eternity.

“ O blessed place indeed, where all the first born sons of God will triumphant-

ly cry out, with loud acclamations of praise, 'forever reign thou eternal omnipotent and all wise creator and sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, who made mankind for the enjoyment of thyself; forever reign, thou well beloved son of the eternal father, who was neither made, nor created but begotten and was ordained to save all those that are willing to accept of life, upon most reasonable terms, and to lay hold of thy most gracious offers; forever reign thou blessed spirit the eternal paraclete, neither made created nor begotten, but proceeding from the father and the son, who by thy most benign influence dost dispose the hearts of the children of men to true Godliness, cherishing the seeds of devotion that are newly sown in their hearts, and dost afford inexpressible comforts to all those that are in trouble. Forever live ye angels of light, that were before the creation of the

world, and will be when that is reduced to its primitive chaos ; forever live the winged quire of cherubins and seraphims that chaunt forth the sweetest songs of praise in the presence of their great creator, whom they worship with never ceasing alacrity. Forever live Moses and Aaron, with all the ancient prophets who foretold the coming of the true Messiah ; forever live ye Apostles and Disciples of the blessed Jesus, who left your possessions and hazarded all that was dear to you in the service of so gracious a master : forever live ye noble army of martyrs, those millions of souls that cheerfully laid down your lives to express your grateful affection to him, who first died a most bitter cruel and ignominious death on the cross for your redemption ; forever live all ye worthy members of the true catholic church, who constantly serve God with a holy worship, and are mutually joined together in a noble fellowship."

“ Then all the heavenly host will exult, and with united voices say, “ O God the father of heaven, we will forever laud and magnify thy most glorious name, for thy wonderful condescension, in receiving our souls into thy everlasting mansions of rest ; O holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, what shall we render to thee, but the just tribute of praise and adoration, or what shall we ascribe to thy unspeakable grandeur, but all power, might, majesty and dominion for ever ! O God the son, redeemer of the world, we acknowledge thee to be the only son of the almighty father, we meekly own and admire thy stupendous love, in taking our nature upon thyself ; in bearing the iniquities of us all, in redeeming us from the powers of death and the grave, in numbering us amongst those that are saved, and in opening the gates of thy favour, to receive us into a glorious Kingdom, where there is fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasure, at thy right hand



for evermore. Here we will pay the vows that we have so often made with our lips, and do the everlasting homage, for all thy inestimable benefits ; sacred hymns and spiritual songs of thanksgiving shall be our constant employments in this thy house, not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens. O God the holy ghost, thou eternal emanation of the father and the son, who hast at all times so bountifully given us thy divine assistance, we desire eternally to adore thy infinite goodness ; since by the means of thy auspicious, conduct we are made *more than conquerors* ; for now the day of salvation is come, and we that sat so long *in darkness* and shadow of death, are dazzled with the resplendent light of thy illustrious presence. O holy, blessed and glorious trinity, three persons and one God, all our work shall be to magnify and set forth the noble praise of so mysterious a God-head, and for

ever to contemplate the astonishing perfections of the divine essence.

“ And indeed, this will be the constant employment of all true believers when they are once admitted into the courts of the heavenly *Jerusalem* ; where there will be no rebellion against God, no heresy to be spread abroad, no schism to be raised, no false doctrine to be taught, no erroneous opinions to be broached ; no Atheism, nor flouting at religion, no ridiculing of piety, no conspiracy or plot, against governors ; no animosities, nor dissensions among the people ; no envying nor repining at our superiors, no heats nor transports of passion against our inferiors ; no craft by day nor assaults by night ; no out-cries of murder, nor danger of sudden death : no uncharitable thoughts, nor unreasonable censures ; no covetous desire of wealth nor vain ambition of honor ; no blindness nor deceit of heart ; no circumci-

sion, nor baptism to be renewed ; no agony, nor bloody wounds on the cross ; no remembrance of former miscarriages ; no mention made of sin ; no misery nor pain to be endured ; no anguish nor tribulation ; no sickness nor death, nor any other evil whatsoever that can be named.

“Thus, my dear friend, I have discovered to you, what there is, and what there is not in heaven, to the utmost of my weak capacity ; and all I shall now desire of you is, that you would spend the remaining moments of your life in such a due preparation for your great change, that when death has closed the eyes of your frail body, your precious immortal soul may take its flight above the starry firmament, where you will soon see, whether matters be really so as they are here represented, and you will resolve me, what manner of description I have made of those blessed mansions, when I shall happily meet you there, and

see your face again with joy ; which the great God grant, of his infinite mercy, for the sake of his beloved son Jesus Christ our Lord : *Amen.*

I might perhaps be charged with entertaining an over fond opinion of my own abilities, if I should proceed to give a particular account, of those raptures of joy, even to an extancy, with which this dying gentleman was transported, upon my preceding discourse of the divine glory, and the happy state of the blessed in heaven ; so that I shall choose rather to conceal some of his expressions than to appear vain-glorious in the least. At that time, he began to speak to this effect : “ O my loving friends, cry mightily to God, that he would take pity of me, a forlorn miserable sinner, and not remember my Atheism, nor profaneness, nor any other of my notorious vile offences ; but that he would be pleased to rescue me from the pit of destruction, and receive me into his immediate

presence, in the celestial mansions, where I shall be freed from this body of sin : Oh ! Pray earnestly, that I may be delivered from blindness of heart, and a slavish fear of his justice : but that all my love and affection for him, may be cordially sincere, not proceeding from a dread of his wrathful vengeance, but from an unfeigned zeal for his divine laws : pray, that no temptations or delusions of the devil may frustrate my endeavours ? either by leading me into a vain hope of mercy, or driving me into utter despair.

“ I would also entreat you to pray, that I may get the victory over death, and the grave, having such sublime knowledge and understanding infused into my soul, that by the manner of my departure out of this world, you may see I die in the true faith of Christ's Catholic church. Make earnest prayers and supplications, that I

may be as sincere a penitent, as ever offended the Almighty, and that this my contrition may prove instrumental for the converting of many sinners, to the wisdom of the just ; as also, that this my late reformation, may be no president for others to defer their repentance, till they come to lay down their head on a dying pillow ; in regard, that it is a thousand to one, whether God will accept of a life mispent in a continual course of sin : for there are but two examples in holy writ, that may be of any force to keep back them and Me, from falling into the dreadful abyss of despair ; that is to say the penitent thief on the cross, and the loitering labourers in the vineyard : and alas ! They would appear to be very different from our case, if we did but make a serious scrutiny into the nature of the several circumstances.

“ O my friends, continued he, pray that all the injury I have done to my

fellow creatures in any respect whatsoever, may be forgiven by God and them : pray for me as long as you perceive any life or motion, and be often recommending my poor departing soul to the divine protection : let not your hearts be troubled because I am going to leave the world, and shall see your face no more ; but lament, that I lived so long in a wilful disobedience to the commands of heaven ; weep not for the loss of me, but mourn that I have done no more for the sake of Christ : behold the struggleings of a dying sinner, with the king of terrors, and observe what wrestling there is between the flesh and spirit ; now the devil is storming the strong holds of my soul, with fierce and repeated assaults ; O pray, that he may not be able to enter, nor take possession of them : Now my noble part is alarmed on all sides, and finds it very difficult to defend itself against these furious attacks ; neither do I know what will be the event of

so hazardous an encounter. Here you may behold the bitter fruits of sin, and see a poor unhappy wretch, that would admit of no reproof in the time of his health, but thought himself too wise for instruction : alas ! Had I followed the advice of my teachers and other friends, I had not been in this deplorable condition, nor exposed to so dubious a conflict, but might have cheerfully left all things here below, with profound peace, and a comfortable assurance of the divine favour for ever.

“ Now I begin to grow faint, my spirits sink apace ; my breath is shortened and interrupted with sighs and groans ; I am retiring to my last fort the grave, but where my poor soul will arrive, I am not able to divine. Take compassion of me, O my friends, and see whether your prayers can prevail on my behalf, at the throne of grace ; Oh ! wrestle with the almighty God of *Israel*, and try what can be done : I will hope for mercy, but I fear it is



more than I deserve : Oh ! pity me, for my calamities are exceeding dreadful, and the burden of my sins is intolerable ; who is there on my side, is there any one that suffers with me in a tender compassion equal to my sorrow ? now my voice begins to sound low, my speech falters, and within a while, few will hear what I have to say for myself ; but you will see anon, what a sharp combat there will be between life and death, soul and body, heaven and hell, virtue and vice, hope and fear ; so that you cannot tell who will win the day. However if I depart with a smile, hope for the best, but if you see me give up the ghost with a frown, fear the worst ; I can also assure you this far, that I shall see the dawn of another day ; then farewell my dear relations and friends.

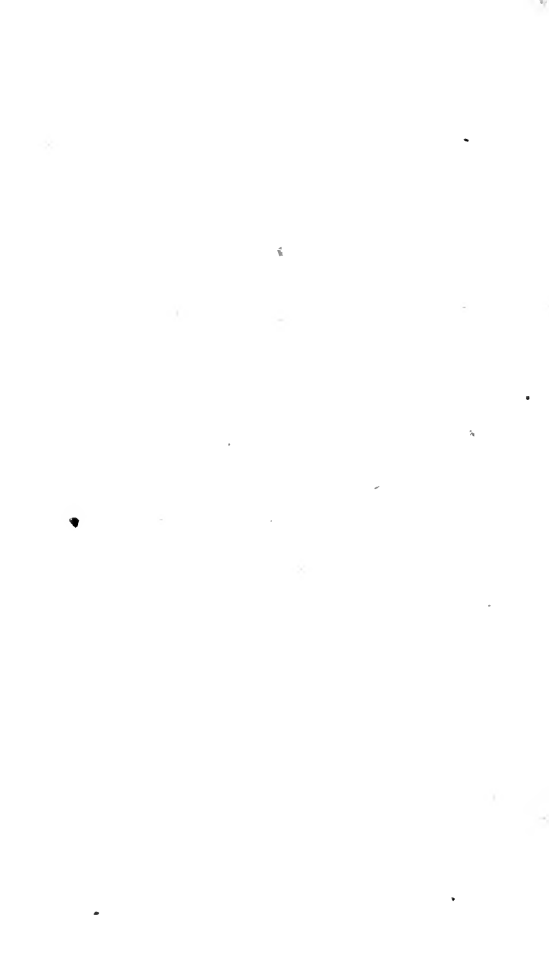
This happened about three o'clock in the afternoon, on a Thursday, and the gentleman lived till four

o'clock the next morning ; it being the summer season : they that watched with him all night, heard him speak these words softly to himself, *Oh that I had possession of the meanest place in heaven, and could but creep into one corner of it !* Afterward he cried out several times together, *O dear, O dear,* and near a minute before he expired I perceived him to look full in my face, with a smiling countenance ; so that we have reason to hope, he is now beyond the reach both of human ill-will and diabolical malice. Thus I have given the best account, that I could possibly, of some part of this unfortunate gentleman's life, when he was in health, and more especially set down all the particular circumstances worthy of remark, that happened during the forty days of his last sickness. If there be any imperfections in the several discourses he made to me, the reader is desired, not to lay the blame

on the ingenious author, but on my want of natural and acquired abilities for the compiling of them after a due manner; for certainly could I have committed his expressions to writing *verbatim*, in the same pure and elegant stile, as they distilled from his eloquent lips, I really believe it would have been one of the most admirable pieces that are now extant: and indeed, had he improved his excellent parts, in the time of his health and prosperity, to as good purpose, as he did in the few days of his sickness and adversity, he might have been deservedly styled, one of the choicest flowers in the garden of the world,



AN  
*ESSAY*  
ON  
THE DURATION  
OF  
*ETERNITY.*



# AN ESSAY

ON THE

DURATION OF ETERNITY.

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MANY of the ancients have represented eternity by several emblems, but all their idea's apparently fall as short of it, as time does of that incommensurable quantity ; neither do I presume to show any perfect resemblance of it: for were I so fortunate as to be indowed with all the excellent qualities that human nature is capable of, nevertheless I should be altogether insufficient for the performance of so great a work. I have often thought on eternity

with astonishment, and the more I have reflected upon it, the more I have been amazed: it may indeed be compared to an inexpressible duration of time, to the bottomless sea, that none can fathom, to a perpetual motion, to a globe or a sphere, a wheel or a circle, which are not limited by any visible bounds, so as to know where they begin or end ; but in regard that all these things afford so imperfect a representation of it, I shall proceed to my main design, which is to bring all judicious persons to such a consideration of this eternal future state, as may influence the whole course of their lives ; for I am thoroughly persuaded that if every christian would set a-part but six minutes every day, for the comparing of his short life to eternity, he would not



presume wilfully to offend or transgress the divine laws. Indeed, I know not how to account for the enormous wickedness of our age, when I see men running headlong into the pit of destruction, and just ready to fall down the dismal precipice of sin, without the least concern upon their spirits, and all for want of due consideration of eternity, and especially such serious reflections as these :

“O Lord what am I doing, I am travelling apace to the eternal mansions, but to what sort of them I am going, I know not ; that is to say, whether it be to enter upon an eternity of misery and despair, or an eternity of happiness and joy ; if to the former, I am undone forever, if to the latter, I am in a place of safety. O vast profound, bottomless, unfathomable eternity, what

dimensions can I ascribe to thee, I am entirely swallowed up in the contemplation of thee ; and can find no center ! I fear I am launching out into the main ocean of eternal pains ; so that if the almighty does not vouchsafe to stretch forth the right hand of his immense power to save, I shall perish everlastingly. O my dear Lord, rouse up my soul from the deadly lethargy of insensibility of heart, by the assistance of thy holy spirit ; for there are but few sands left to run in the glass of my life. Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, send out thy light and thy truth, let thy rod and thy staff comfort me ; so as my spirits may be supported in this my last extremity ; and then I will fear no evil, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. O Lord, I have grievously offended

thy divine majesty, and spun out the greatest part of this momentary life, without a serious thought of eternity : I lay altogether at thy mercy, so that if thou wilt, thou can'st cut this thread of life in a moment, and make me for ever miserable.

“ Lord, give me grace I most humbly beseech thee, to leave off all my impieties, bidding a final adieu to careless thoughts and beloved lusts ; to vain discourses and unlawful desires ; then I shall be unconcerned at what I suffer in this world, so that I may escape the immense duration of eternal punishments. O eternity, eternity, shall I be so cruel to my poor soul, as to cast it into the fiery furnace of the divine vengeance to endless ages, only for the gratifying of my sensual appetite in a moment's sin-

ful pleasure? what are all things here in comparison of an eternal state; what an emptiness is there in all the delights I so much admire, -when I draw aside the curtain near so little, and look into the scene of eternity! Alas, these transient gaudy vanities, are like a tale that is told, or a dream of a minute's continuance!

What indiscretion ought to be imputed to any man's conduct, who should make a voluntary choice to live in this world for the space of 120 years, and enjoy all the pleasing entertainments that tongue could express, heart conceive, or human inclination wish for; but at the expiration of that term, should slide off the stage into a dreadful abyss of darkness, and there continue ten thousand years; whereas he might have

reigned in the upper regions of bliss, and have bathed himself in the refreshing streams of consummate pleasure, to the extent of some millions of ages, only upon condition to endure a few days confinement within the precincts of repentance and mortification ! What would all judicious persons take such a man to be, but one utterly bereaved of his wits, or void of common sense ; would they not conclude, that no reasonable creature could possibly be guilty of so prodigious a piece of folly, or possessed with such unaccountable madness ! Then what may be laid to my charge, that entered this vale of tears about thirty or forty years ago, and according to the usual period of human life, must depart within the compass of as many more ? During all the

time that has passed, I have met with nothing but disappointments, and have been floating up and down like a cork on the water, or a distressed mariner in a storm; and as for those few remains of life that may be left, I can discern but a melancholy prospect before me, with little hopes of seeing more prosperous days: So that if I may give credit to the presages of reason, the heavens already begin to look dark and lowering, as if the land where I live were to be reduced to a heap of confusion, whilst my leaky vessel is tossed to and fro in the vast ocean, where every unruly wave may sport itself with rocking me up and down, till my crazy bottom falls to decay, and sinks into the bottomless gulph of despair.

But suppose the best, That all may be calm and serene, and that the sovereign vessel of this my beloved native country, notwithstanding the loss of its great state-pilot, and one of the best kings that ever swayed a royal sceptre should happily come to ride an anchor, in the desired haven of an honourable and lasting peace; where no scenes of Parisian bloody massacres will offend our sight, no French tyrant any longer usurp, no Spanish Armado surprize, and no false Judas's within our own borders attempt to betray the nation to the fury of its implacable enemies: admit I say it were so, that these and many other notable advantages could be obtained, nevertheless my days can never be crowned with the favours of the great, or the adventitious smiles of princes, so as to make my for-

tune or any considerable advances to the pinnacle of honor ; for I came out of the dark cell of my mother's womb, without making any great figure or bustle in the world : neither have I been the occasion of any proceedings worthy of note, in church or state, so as to signalize my name to the pilots at the helm ; and for aught I know, may lay myself down in the silent grave, with as little noise, as when I first entered upon this mortal state.

I plainly see, I am none of the world's darlings, and shall receive but few of its specious favours ; so that when I have fetched a few faint wishes more after these golden baits, I shall descend into the bottomless gulph of a vast eternity, where I must abide in the blackness of darkness for evermore. At that instant, I shall see the be-



gining of that endless state, and when I have continued in it as many ages, as I have lived moments on earth, this will be but a very short space of time, in comparison of the infinite duration of eternity : nay when I have dwelt in those gloomy and spacious regions, as many millions of years as there are men now living on the surface of the earth, this will be but a small pittance, with respect to the inexhaustible stock of eternity : when I have been imprisoned in that unfathomable abyss, as many millions of ages, as there are stars in the firmament, one thousandth part of my eternal state, will not be as yet elapsed ; and when I have been bound in those chains of darkness, as many hundreds of thousands of millions of ages, as Methusalem lived ; or as there are

motes of fine dust in the whole compass of the earth ; or grains of sand, or drops of water in the boundless ocean ; or any other atoms or most minute particles whatsoever encircled by the circumference of the universal globe ; yet an half quarter of the duration of eternity will not be expired. Or, when I have been under the confinement of the prince of darkness, as many millions of years, as the world could contain figures of nine, written as close as could be on fine paper, supposed to be of a proportionable size ; nevertheless eternity will not as yet spend any considerable part of its course towards a final period.

If the case be really so, how much greater folly would this be in me, than in the person, whose example was produced a little be-

fore ! certainly such a notorious act of extreme foolishness deserves punishment.

Therefore I may well think it but just, that almighty God should deprive me of his glorious presence, to all eternity, if it were only upon account of so grand a piece of stupidity, which cannot possibly be excused by any means whatsoever. Now to apply what has been said, there is no person within the pale of Christ's church, being capable of distinguishing good from evil, who lives and dies in a sinful course, without unfeigned repentance, but makes the same fatal choice, I have been treating of. And indeed, a man might have some pretence, not to value the infringement of the divine laws, if he were sure to enjoy all the forfeiting pleasures of sin, that his

vain fancy could suggest, without the least interruption, or mixture of grief, for an hundred and twenty years, and then only live in a mournful silence, for the space of a thousand ; at the expiration of which term, he should either return to his former delights, or else be annihilated or reduced to nothing.

But no tolerable excuse can be made for those, that are willing to purchase this world, at so dear a rate, as the loss of their most precious and immortal souls : however, show me the man that has secured the globe of the earth for his own possession ; and admit it could be done, I am apt to believe, the burden would be so heavy, as to oblige him to crave the help of others, or to let go his vain embraces : there never was any sin-

gle person, who in so short a space of time obtained the sovereign command of the greater part of the habitable earth, so far as it was known to the antients, as that famous Macedonian youth Alexander the great did, within the compass of a few years ; and yet all these vast possessions afforded no matter of consolation or rejoicing to this victorious prince, who was suddenly seized with a fit of melancholy, and wept, because there was no more worlds to conquer. Oh the vain ambition of a carnal mind, which is incessantly seeking out for undiscovered treasures, and when they are once attained to, still continues destitute of real satisfaction ! So that the generality of mankind in our age, make no scruple to sell their souls, those

jewels of an inestimable price, for a small portion of wordly gain.

When I reflect on these things, my admiration is raised to the highest pitch, especially when I see such vast multitudes, in every corner of the world obstinately fighting against the truth.

Oh vain and foolish mortals, what enchantments are those that draw you on so insensibly to utter ruin and destruction ! Why are you so faithful to the prince of darkness, and take so great pains in his service, since he is so false and treacherous to you ; promising to grant a patent for your enjoying of all things here below, if you will fall down and worship him ; whereas instead of giving you all these enjoyments, he brings you to the real possession of nothing but a world of trouble and vexation of spirit ;

so that by your engagement in his interests, you are deprived of the lawful delights of this life, and lose your share of the comforts both of the present state, and of that which is to come.

Then let me entreat you by all the compassionate caresses of a most merciful God, the indulgent father of spirits, as you tender the salvation of your immortal souls ; as you value your peace here, and a crown of glory hereafter ; and as you desire to avoid being overtaken by an eternal night of grief ; turn to the Lord your God with sincerity of heart, before your passing-bell begins to toll ; for then the officers of grace will cease and there will be no longer any space for repentance. If you are desirous to seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he

is near, make no farther delay, but enter into yourself to this effect.

“ Arise, my benighted soul, and view the dangerous precipice on which thou standest ; it was ten to one, but some of the instruments of death had come to surprize thee in this spiritual slumber, and suddenly hurried thee away into the confines of eternity : Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name ; for it is of his infinite mercy, more than thy deserts, that thou art not consumed and utterly destroyed.”

How many on my right hand, and on the left, behind and before, are removed out of this world, in their imaginary security of a long life, and yet **I** continue (praised be God) in the land of the living ! What a remarkable providence is this, that cannot be sufficiently



admired ; what an astonishing mark of the loving kindness of the Lord never to be forgotten ! Then let me run into the corners of the world, and stir up my drowsy neighbours and friends ; crying out with a loud voice, “Awake, awake ye sloathful sons of men, and see the devouring flames of eternity just ready to break in upon you ; make haste to fly from the wrath to come ; take your final leave of these momentary pleasures, and look upon all the frivolous vanities here below with scorn and derision. But if none of these friendly compellations will rouse them, I will return with this resolve, that though all mankind run hastily in the broad way that leads to destruction, nevertheless I will enter upon the serious consideration of eternity, and strenuously lay hold

of that life of everlasting rest, which is prepared for those that strive to pass through the straight gate, and use their utmost laudable endeavours to take the kingdom of heaven as offered in the scriptures.

Oh the admirable eternal rewards, the exceeding weight of glory, I shall attain to in the palace of the most mighty King of heaven ; where I shall be honored in the highest degree, by all the celestial host, ever reigning with them in the presence of our great creator, and interchangeably chanting forth his noble praise ; where I shall be transcendently renowned, and as happy as sovereign felicity itself can make me, during the ages of an infinite eternity. In those blissful regions, I shall be had in everlasting remembrance, and I shall be indued with a clear

understanding, by the more immediate knowledge of the divine excellencies, proceeding from the illuminating influence of the beatifical vision: There my intellectual parts will be refined, my judgment ripened, my affections sublimed, my memory enlarged, my senses ravished with astonishing objects, and all the faculties of my soul, raised to the highest degree of perfection. There my eyes shall behold the glorious things that are spoken of the City of God, and my ears shall hear the melodious songs of thanksgivings: there such incomparable joys will continually flow into my everlasting peace, tranquillity and rest, neither will there ever be the least diminution or abatement of my happiness: for when I have been praising my sovereign creator, blessed redeem-

er, and gracious sanctifier, as many ages as there are sands on the sea-shore, my glorious eternity will be but just begun ; nay when **I** have lived in this blissful state ; as many centuries of years, as there are motes in the air throughout the whole universe, the duration of my eternal rest, will be as far from expiring, as it was the first moment **I** entered those heavenly mansions.

Oh happy eternity, that is always spending itself in the contemplation and adoration of the supreme deity, and yet never comes to any end or conclusion ; an eternity that flies with a swifter motion than a thought or a dream, and yet finds no center ! O the prodigious amazing duration of that resplendent day, when Christ the eternal saviour of the world will for-

ver reign with his adopted brethren, the sons of God ; a day that is continually running on, but never draws near to an evening-twilight ! O that I could give the children of the New Jerusalem, an exact model of that eternity of time, which they are to spend, in the presence of the holy Jesus ! Oh the eternity of refreshment they will find in the inexhaustible fountains of living waters, that take their rise from the throne of the lamb for ever ! O the eternity of turns they will take in the midst of those fragrant walks, that are surrounded on all sides by delightful rivers, and shaded with the noble trees of life, which bear twelve sorts of fruit, and blossom every month ; whose leaves are always verdant, yielding a balsam of admirable virtue for the healing of the nations ! Oh the

eternity of pleasure they will enjoy in beholding the illustrious face of the omnipotent Lord of heaven and earth, and having their names written on their foreheads.

Oh that I could duly express the little need that these heavenly citizens will have of the light of that material sun, which shines here on earth ; since the great and glorious God Jehovah, who reigns with them for ever and ever, will be their only resplendent light and life to eternal ages. In that royal metropolis, they will be continually employed in contemplating the most beauteous excellencies of the king of Heaven, for an infinite number of years, and see him as it were a bridegroom richly adorned for the reception of his beloved spouse : Millions

of years of Jubilee, that they will spend in the Celestial tabernacle of the most high ! For they shall be his chosen people for ever, and if we prudently take care to follow their foot-steps, we shall one day be their associates, when our short lives will be swallowed up in the boundless ocean of eternity. There they will also see the transcendent beauties of that illustrious bride, the Lamb's wife, not only for a day, but to the extent of an infinite eternity. Oh the clear fountains of life, that will ever flow like so many rising springs to refresh the spirits of the noble army of Martyrs, who overcame the wicked one, and turned not their backs in the day of battle !

Blessed eternity, I am ravished with admiration, whenever I cast an eye on the inconceivable

abyss of thy duration, or reflect never so little on thy immensity ! I have insisted so long on eternity, that I have even oppressed my most sublime thoughts with the intense meditation of it ; I am so far immersed in those streams, which always flow but never ebb, that I know not how to withdraw my pen, to treat of another subject : for the more I write of eternity, the more is still left behind unexpressed, and the farther search I make to find it out, the less account I can give of it ; nay the deeper I dive into it, at so much the more distance I find myself from its unfathomable bottom : Come lead me out of this astonishing labyrinth, or else I shall be quite lost in the contemplation of an endless eternity : for I could willingly enlarge on this theme to the longest date of life, and yet I



know not what to deliver farther in order to give my reader a true idea of the duration of eternity, than the reflections I have already made. And indeed, I perceive myself to come as far short of its real dimensions, as before I began my essay. So that all the reward I expect for attempting to unfold this great mystery, which I am not capable to comprehend, is the hopes of the favourable acceptance of my sincere endeavours for the benefit of the public.

Not that my design was to make an over-nice inquiry into the secrets of the ineffable essence of the triune God-head: let no such thoughts possess my mind, until I am translated from time to eternity, when my inquisitive desires will be accomplished, and I shall have as perfect a knowledge of its transcen-

dent nature, as is ageeable to the divine will of the ever-living God: neither would I have any one that shall happen to peruse this small essay upon the duration of eternity, proceed any otherwise in the search of it, than I have done; for I have dived no farther into this unfathomable ocean, than every good christian ought to do, in regard that by such meditations as these, we may effectually wean our affections from all earthly and temporal things, and fix them on those that are heavenly and eternal: and I earnestly beseech the great God Jehovah, who was from everlasting, is and ever shall be that he would vouchsafe of his infinite mercy, so to effect the souls of all those that read these few lines, with a dew respect and veneration for his divine excellen-

cies, as he has done mine in the composing of them.

For by discoursing of the immensity of my eternal future state, and the shortness of my abode in this earthly tabernacle, with the emptiness of all sublunary enjoyments, I hope I have brought my mind to such a temper, as cheerfully to bid an everlasting farewell to all the perishing delights of this vain and transitory world, and so address my prayers to the throne of grace, that I may be admitted to partake of those pure celestial joys that are at God's right hand for evermore, as if my soul was just ready to take its flight into the vast regions of a boundless eternity. I also hope, I shall look upon the gliding hours of every day of this dying life, as a quick motion to that immense state, and by such

effectual means disentangle myself more and more from those allurements to sin, that may in the least obstruct my refined meditations on so noble a subject: so that it may never be objected against me, with any appearance of truth, that I had indeed made a florid discourse, in very pathetic terms about an eternity of pain, and another of joy, but my life and conversation was not at all suitable to those sublime notions. May no such dreadful charges as these be brought in at the judgment-seat of Christ, to condemn my immortal soul, to a dismal exile in the lower regions of an eternal night: may a serious reflection upon what has been delivered on this article, bring you and me, to the full enjoyment of the divine presence, and the transporting

delights of the beatifical vision to all eternity.

However, I would not have my meaning misinterpreted, so as to make a show of my being more excellent than my neighbour in the least respect; for I readily acknowledge myself, to be one of the meanest and most unworthy members of the creation, and the almighty searcher of hearts knows how desirous I am to stand afar off; clapping my hand on my breast and crying aloud to him with the humble publican, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner or else I perish everlastingly, O God take pity of me, the most notorious of offenders; I am very sensible, all my righteousness is but as filthy rags in thy sight, and that unless I be thoroughly cleansed by the blood of Jesus, that immaculate lamb, who

was slain, to take away the sins of the world, I shall be miserable to eternal ages." Therefore, for the avoiding of all suspicion of vain glory, let me entreat thee, courteous reader, not to entertain so bad an opinion of me, as to think, I mean the setting forth of my own person or private capacity, when I speak so often in the first person singular; on the contrary, I would always have thee take it to thyself; since this is my particular way of expression, which, as I conceive, may raise thy devout affections to a higher pitch of zeal, than if I should deliver my sentiments in the second or third person, either singular or plural.

To conclude, I will not fail incessantly to recommend thy precious soul to the protection of almighty God here, and to his everlasting

Kingdom hereafter, where thou shalt reign with him in an eternity of happiness and rest, in an eternity of peace and tranquillity, in an eternity of pleasure and joy, in an eternity of praise and thanksgiving, in an eternity of hallelujahs and spiritual songs to the holy and lofty one that inhabits eternity ; and who alone is worthy of all honor, worship and adoration, world without end, Amen.





ADVANTAGEOUS

THOUGHTS

ON THE

DUTY OF MAN.



ADVANTAGEOUS

# THOUGHTS

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THAT intercession is a great and necessary part of Christian devotion, is very evident from scripture.

The first followers of Christ seem to support all their love, by prayers for one another.

St. Paul, whether he writes to particular persons or churches, shows that they are the constant subject of his prayers. Thus to the *Philippians*, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you: always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy, *Phil.* i. 4, 5.

His devotion had also the same care for particular persons, as appears by the following passage : I thank my God, whom I serve from my fore-fathers, with a pure conscience, that, without ceasing, I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day, *2 Tim. i. 3.*

How holy an acquaintance and friendship was this, how worthy of persons, that were raised above the world, and related to one another, as new members of a kingdom of heaven !

Apostles and great saints did not only thus bless particular Churches, and private persons ; but they themselves also received graces from God by the prayers of others. Thus saith *St. Paul* to the *Corinthians*, you also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf, *2 Cor. i. 11.*

This was the ancient friendship of Christians, uniting and cementing their hearts, not by worldly considerations, or human passions, but by the mutual

communication of spiritual blessings, by prayers and thanksgivings to God for one another.

It was this holy intercession that raised Christians to such a state of mutual love, as far exceeded all that had been admired in human friendship. And when the same spirit of *intercession* is again in the world, this holy friendship will be again in fashion, and Christianity will be again the wonder of the world, for that exceeding love which they bear to one another.

For a *frequent* intercession with God, earnestly beseeching him to forgive the sins of all mankind, to bless them with his providence, enlighten them with his spirit, and bring them to everlasting happiness, is the divinest exercise that the heart of man can be engaged in.

Be daily therefore on your knees in a solemn, deliberate performance of this devotion, praying for others with such *length, importunity, and earnestness*, as you use for yourself; and you will find all little, ill-natured passions die

away ; and your heart will delight in the common happiness of others, as you used only to delight in your own.

For it is hardly possible for you to beseech God to make any one happy in his glory to all eternity, and yet be troubled to see him enjoy the much smaller gifts of God in this life.

For how strange would it be, to pray to God to grant *health* and a longer *life* to a *sick man*, and at the same time to *envy* him the poor pleasures of *agreeable medicines* ?

But the greatest benefits of intercession are then received, when it descends to such particular instances as our state and condition in life more particularly require of us.

Though we are to treat all mankind as neighbours and brethren, as occasion offers ; yet as we can only live in the actual society of a few, and are more particularly related to some than others ; so when our intercession is made an exercise of love and care for those amongst whom our lot is fallen, or who belong

to us in a nearer relation, it then becomes the greatest benefit to ourselves.

If therefore you should always alter your intercessions, according as the needs of your neighbours or acquaintances require : beseeching God to deliver them from such or such particular evils, or to grant them this or that particular gift, or blessing ; such intercessions, besides the great charity of them, would have a mighty effect upon your own heart.

This would make it pleasant to you to be courteous, civil, and condescending to all about you, and make you unable to say or do a rude or hard thing to those for whom you had used yourself to be so kind and compassionate in your prayers.

For there is nothing that makes us love a man so much as praying for him ; and when you can once do this sincerely for any man, you have fitted your soul for the performance of every thing that is kind and civil towards him.

This will fill your heart with a gene-

rosity and tenderness, that will give you a better and sweeter behaviour, than any thing that is called fine breeding and good manners.

By considering yourself as an advocate with God for your neighbours and acquaintance, you would never find it hard to be at peace with them yourself. It would be easy to you to bear with, and forgive those, for whom you particularly implored the divine mercy and forgiveness.

Such prayers as these amongst neighbours and acquaintance, would unite them to one another in the strongest bonds of love and tenderness. It would teach them to consider one another in a higher state, as members of a spiritual society, that are created for the enjoyment of the common blessings of God, and fellow heirs of the same glory. And by being thus desirous that every one should have their full share of the favours of God, they would be glad to see one another happy in the little enjoyments of this life.



*Ouranius* is a holy priest, full of the spirit of the gospel, watching, labouring, and praying for a poor *country village*. Every soul in it is as dear to him as himself; and he loves them all, as he loves himself, because he prays for them all, as often as he prays for himself.

If his whole life is one continual exercise of great zeal and labour, hardly ever satisfied with degrees of care and watchfulness, it is because he has learned the great value of souls, by so often appearing before God as an *intercessor* for them.

He never thinks he can love, or do enough for his flock; because he never considers them in any other view, than as so many persons, that, by receiving the gifts and graces of God, are to become his *hope*, his *joy*, and his *crown of rejoicing*.

He goes about his parish, and visits every body in it; but visits in the same spirit of piety that he preaches to them: he visits them to encourage their virtues, to assist them with his advice and

counsel, to discover their manner of life, and to know the state of their souls, that he may *intercede* with God for them, according to their particular necessities.

When *Ouranius* first entered into holy orders, he had a *haughtiness* in his temper, a great *contempt* and *disregard* for all foolish and unreasonable people ; but he has *prayed away* this spirit, and has now the greatest tenderness for the most obstinate sinners ; because he is always hoping, that God will sooner or later hear those *prayers* that he makes for their repentance.

The *rudeness*, *ill-nature*, or *perverse* behaviour of any of his flock, used at first to betray him into impatience ; but it now raises no other passion in him, than a desire of being upon his knees in prayer to God for them.

Thus has his *prayers* for others *altered* and *amended* the state of his own heart.

It would strangely delight you to see with what *spirit* he converses, with what *tenderness* he reproofs, with what *af-*

*fection* he exhorts, and with what *vi-*  
*gour* he preaches ; and it is all owing to  
 this, because he reproves, exhorts, and  
 preaches to those, for whom he first  
*prays* to God.

This devotions soften his heart, en-  
 lightens his mind, sweetens his temper,  
 and makes every thing that comes from  
 him, instructive, amiable and affecting.

At his first coming to this little *vil-*  
*lage*, it was as disagreeable to him  
 as a prison, and every day seemed too  
 tedious to be endured in so retired a  
 place. He thought his parish was too  
 full of poor and mean people, that none  
 of them were fit for the conversation  
 of a *gentleman*.

This put him upon a close applica-  
 tion to his studies. He kept much at  
 home, and sometimes thought it hard  
 to be called to pray by any poor body,  
 when he was just in the midst of his  
 studies.

This was his *polite* turn of mind, be-  
 fore devotion had got the government  
 of his heart.

But, now his days are so far from being tedious, or his parish too great a retirement, that he only wants more time to do that variety of good which his soul thirsts after. The solitude of his little parish is become a matter of great comfort to him, because he hopes that God has placed him and his flock there to make it their way to heaven.

He can now not only converse with, but gladly attend and *wait* upon the poorest kind of people. He is now daily watching over the *weak* and *infirm*, humbling himself to perverse, rude, ignorant people wherever he can find them ; and is so far from desiring to be considered as a *gentleman*, that he desires to be used as the *servant* of all.

He now thinks the poorest creature in his parish good enough, and great enough, to deserve the humblest attendances, the kindest friendships, the tenderest offices, he can possibly show them.

He is so far now from wanting a greeable company, that he thinks there is no better conversation in the world than to be talking with *poor* and *mean* people about the kingdom of heaven.

All these noble thoughts and divine sentiments are the effects of his great devotions ; he presents every one so often before God in his prayers, that he never thinks he can *esteem*, *reverence*, or *serve* those enough, for whom he implores so many mercies from God.

He is mightily affected with this passage of holy scripture, *the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avail-eth much*, Jam. v. 16.

This makes him practise all the arts of holy living, and aspire after every instance of piety and righteousness, that his prayers for flock may have their full force, and avail much with God.

For this reason he has sold a small estate that he had, and has erected a charitable retirement for antient poor people, to live in prayer and piety ; that his prayers, being assisted by such

good works, may *pierce the clouds*, and bring down blessings upon those souls committed to his care.

*Ouranius* reads how God himself said unto *Abimelech* concerning *Abraham* : *He is a Prophet ; he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live*, Gen. xx. 7.

And again, how he said of *Job* : *And my servant Job shall pray for you ; for him will I accept*, Job xiii. 8.

From these passages he justly concludes, that the prayers of men eminent for holiness, have an extraordinary power with God ; that he grants to other people such blessings, through their prayers, as would not be granted to men of less piety. This makes him exceeding studious of christian perfection, fearing after every grace and holy temper, fearful of every error and defect in his life, least his prayers for his flock should be less availing with God.

This makes him careful of every *temper* of his heart, give *alms* of all that he hath, *watch*, and *fast*, and *mortify*,

and live according to the strictest rules of *temperance, meekness and humility*, that he may be in some degree like an *Abraham* or a *Job*, in his parish, and make such prayers for them as God will hear and accept.

These are the happy effects which a *devout intercession* hath produced in his life.

And if other people in their several stations, were to imitate this example, in such a manner as suited their particular state of life, they would certainly find the same happy effects from it.

If *masters*, for instance, were thus to remember their *servants* in their prayers, beseeching God to bless them, and suiting their petitions to the particular wants and necessities of their servants; letting no day pass, without a *full performance* of this part of devotion; the benefit would be as great to themselves as to their servants.

No way so likely as this, to inspire them with a true sense of that power which they have in their hand, to make

them delight in doing good, and become exemplary in all the parts of a wise and good master.

The presenting their servants so often before God, as equally related to God, entitled to the same heaven as themselves, would incline them to treat them not only with such *humanity* as became *fellow-creatures*, but with such *tenderness, care, and generosity*, as became *fellow heirs* of the same glory. This devotion would make masters inclined to every thing that was good towards their servants; watchful of their behaviour, and as ready to require of them an exact observance of the duties of christianity as of the duties of their service.

This would teach them to consider their servants as God's servants, to desire their happiness, to do nothing before them that might corrupt their minds to impose no business upon them that should lessen their sense of religion, or hinder them from their full share of devotion, both public and pri-



vate. This praying for them, would make them as glad to see their servants eminent in piety as themselves, and contrive that they should have all opportunities and encouragements, both to know and perform all the duties of the christian life.

How natural would it be for such a master, to perform every part of family devotion ; to have constant prayers ; to excuse no one's absence from them ; to have the scriptures, and books of piety, often read amongst his servants ; to take all opportunities of instructing them, of raising their minds to God, and teaching them to do all their business, as a service to God, and upon the hope and expectations of another life ?.

How natural would it be for such a one to pity their weakness and ignorance, to bear with the dulness of their understandings, or the perverseness of their tempers ; to reprove them with tenderness, exhort them with affection

as hoping that God would hear his prayers for them?

How impossible would it be for a master, that thus interceded with God for his servants, to use any unkind threatenings towards them, to damn and curse them as *dogs* and scoundrels, and treat them only as the dregs of the creation?

This devotion would give them another spirit, and make them consider how to make proper returns of care, kindness, and protection to those, who had spent their strength and time in service and attendance upon them.

Now if *gentlemen* think it too low an employment to exercise such a devotion as this for their servants, let them consider how far they are from the spirit of Christ, who made himself not only an intercessor, but a sacrifice for the whole race of sinful man.

Let them consider how miserable their greatness would be, if the son of God should think it as much below him

to pray for them, as they do to pray for their fellow creatures.

Let them consider how far they are from that spirit which prays for its most unjust enemies, if they have not kindness enough to pray for those, by whose labours and service they live in ease themselves.

Again : if parents should thus make themselves *Advocates* and *Intercessors* with God for their children, constantly applying to heaven in behalf of them, nothing would be more likely, not only to bless their children, but also to dispose their own minds to the performance of every thing that was excellent and praise-worthy.

I do not suppose, but that the generality of parents remember their children in their prayers. But the thing here intended is not a general remembrance of them, but a *regular method* of recommending all their *particular needs* unto God; and of praying for every such *particular grace* and *virtue* for

them as their *state* and *condition* of life shall seem to require.

The state of parents is a holy state, in some degree like that of the priesthood, and calls upon them to bless their children with their prayers and sacrifices to God. Thus it was that holy Job watched over, and blessed his children, he *sanctified them, he rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings, according to the number of them all,* Job i. 5.

If parents therefore, considering themselves in this light, should be daily calling upon God, in a *solemn deliberate* manner, *altering* and *extending* their intercessions, as the state and growth of their children required, such devotion would have a mighty influence upon the rest of their lives ; it would make them very circumspect in the government of themselves ; prudent and careful of every thing they said or did, lest their example should hinder that which they so constantly desired in their prayers.

If a father was daily making particular prayers to God, that he would please to inspire his children with true piety, great humility, and strict temperance, what could be more likely to make the father himself become exemplary in these virtues? How naturally would he grow ashamed of wanting such virtues as he thought necessary for his children? So that his prayers for their piety, would be a certain means of exalting his own.

• If a father thus considered himself as an intercessor with God for his children, to bless them with his prayers, how would such thoughts make him avoid every thing that was displeasing to God, lest when he prayed for his children, God should reject his prayers?

How tenderly, how religiously would such a father converse with his children, whom he considered as his little spiritual flock, whose virtues he was to form by his example, encourage by his authority, nourish by his

counsel, and prosper by his prayers to God for them?

How fearful would he be of all unjust ways of raising their fortune, of bringing them up in pride and indulgence, or of making them too fond of the world, lest he should thereby render them incapable of those graces which he was so often beseeching God to grant them?

*Lastly*, If all people, when they feel the first approaches of *resentment*, *envy*, or *contempt*, towards others; or if in all little disagreements and misunderstandings whatever, they should, instead of indulging their minds with little, low reflections, have recourse at such times to a more particular intercession with God, for such persons as had raised their envy, resentment, or discontent: this would be a certain way to prevent the growth of all uncharitable tempers.

If you was also to form your prayer at that time to the greatest degree of *contrariety* to that temper which you

was then in, it would be an excellent means of mending your heart.

As for instance : when at any time you find in your heart motions of *envy* towards any person, whether on account of his *riches, power, reputation, learning, or advancement*, if you should immediately pray to God to bless and prosper him in that *very thing* which raised your envy ; if you should repeat your petitions in the strongest terms, beseeching God to grant him all the happiness from the enjoyment of it that can possibly be received, you would soon find it to be the best antidote in the world, to expel the venom of that passion.

*Again :* If in any little difference or misunderstandings that you have happened to have at any time with a *relation, a neighbour, or any one else*, you should then pray for them in a more *extraordinary manner* than you ever did before, beseeching God to give them every grace and blessing you can think of, you would take the speediest me-

thod of reconciling all differences, and clearing up all misunderstandings. You would then think nothing too great to be forgiven, stay for no condescensions, need no mediation of a third person, but be glad to testify your love and good will to him, who had so high a place in your secret prayers.

This would remove all peevish passions, soften your heart into the most tender condescensions, and be the best arbitrator of all differences that happened betwixt you and any of your acquaintance.

The greatest resentments amongst friends and neighbours often arise from poor *punctualios*, and *little mistakes* in conduct. A certain sign that their friendship is *merely human*, not founded upon religious considerations, or supported by such a course of mutual prayer for one another as the first Christians used.

For such devotion must necessarily either destroy such tempers, or be itself destroyed by them:



Hence we may also learn the odious nature and exceeding guilt of all *spite, hatred, contempt* and *angry passions*.

They are not to be considered as defects in *good-nature* and *sweetness* of temper, not as failings in *civility* or *good breeding*, but as such *base tempers* as are entirely inconsistent with the *charity* of intercession.

You think it a small matter to be *peevish* or *illnatured* to such or such a man; but you should consider, whether it be a small matter to do that, which you could not do, if you had but so much charity as to be able to recommend him to God in your prayers.

You think it a small matter to *ridicule* one man, and *despise* another; but you should consider, whether it be a small matter to want that charity towards these people which Christians are not allowed to want towards their most inveterate enemies.

For, be but as charitable to these men, do but *bless* and *pray* for them, as you are obliged to *bless* and *pray*

for your *enemies*, and then you will find that you have charity enough, to make it impossible for to treat them with any degree of scorn or contempt.

For you cannot possibly despise and ridicule that man, whom your *private prayers* recommend to the love and favour of God.

When you despise and ridicule a man, it is with no other end but to make him ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of other men. How therefore can it be possible for you sincerely to beseech God to bless that man with the *honour* of his love and favour, whom you desire men to treat as worthy of their *contempt*?

But to return : *intercession* is not only the best arbitrator of all differences, the best promoter of true friendship, the best cure and preservative against all unkind tempers, all angry and haughty passions, but is also of great use to discover to us the true state of our own hearts.

There are many tempers which we think *lawful* and *innocent*, which we never suspect of any harm ; which, if they were to be tried by this devotion, would soon show us how we have deceived ourselves.

These few reflections sufficiently show us, that the different conditions of this life have nothing in them to excite our uneasy passions, nothing that can reasonably interrupt our love and affection to one another.

To proceed now to another motive to this universal love.

Our power of doing external acts of love and goodness, is often very narrow and restrained. There are, it may be, but few people to whom we can contribute any worldly relief.

But though our outward means of doing good are often thus limited, yet, if our hearts are but full of love, we get, as it were, an infinite power ; because God will attribute to us those good works, those acts of love which

we would have performed, had it been in our power.

You cannot heal all the *sick*, relieve all the *poor* : you cannot comfort all in *distress*, nor be a father to all the fatherless. You cannot, it may be, deliver many from their misfortunes, or teach them to find comfort in God.

But if there is a love in your heart, that *excites* you to do *all* that you can ; if your love has *no bounds*, but continually *wishes* and *prays* for the relief of all that are in distress, you will be received by God as a benefactor to those, who had nothing from you but your *good will*, and tender affections.

You cannot build *hospitals* for the *incurable* ; but if you join in your heart with those that do ; if you are a friend to these great friends of mankind, and rejoice in their eminent virtues, you will be received by God as a sharer of such works, as though they had none of your hand, yet had all your heart.

This consideration surely is sufficient to make us look to, and watch over our hearts with all diligence ; to study the improvement of our *inward tempers*, and aspire after the height of a loving charitable, and benevolent mind.

And, on the other hand, we may hence learn the great evil of *envy, spite, hatred, and ill-will*. For if the goodness of our hearts will entitle us to the reward of good actions, which we never performed ; it is certain that the badness of our hearts, will bring us under the guilt of actions that we have never committed.

Since therefore our hearts, which are always naked and open to the eyes of God, give such an exceeding extent and increase, either to our virtues or vices, it is our greatest business to govern the motions of our hearts, to correct and improve the inward state of our souls.

These reasons sufficiently show, that

no love is holy or religious, till it becomes *universal*.

For if religion requires me to love all persons as God's creatures, that belong to him, that bear his image, enjoy his protection, and make parts of his family and household : if these are the great reasons, why I should live in love and friendship with any one man in the world, they are the same great reasons why I should live in love and friendship with every man in the world; and consequently, I offend against *all these reasons*, whenever I want love towards any one man. The sin therefore of hating or despising any one man, is like the sin of hating all God's creation; and the necessity of loving any one man, is the same necessity of loving every man in the world. And though many people may appear to us ever so sinful, odious, or extravagant in their conduct, we must never look upon that as the least motive for any contempt or disregard of them ; but look upon them with the greater compassion, as being

in the most pitiable condition that can be.

As it was the sins of the world, that made the Son of God become a compassionate suffering advocate for all men; so no one is of the spirit of Christ, but he that has the *utmost compassion* for sinners. And you have never less reason to be pleased with yourself, than when you find yourself most offended at the behaviour of others. All sin is certainly to be hated; but then, we must set ourselves against sin as we do against *sickness and diseases*, by showing ourselves tender and compassionate to the *sick and diseased*.

All other hatred of sin, which does not fill the heart with the *softest, tenderest* affections towards persons miserable in it, is the servant of sin at the same time that it seems to be hating it.

And there is no temper which even good men ought more carefully to guard against than this. For it is a temper that lurks under the cover of many

virtues, and by being unsuspected does the more mischief.

A man naturally fancies, that it is his own love of virtue that makes him not able to bear with those that want it ; and when he *abhors* one man, *despises* another, and cannot bear the *name* of a third, he supposes it all to be a proof of his own *high sense* of virtue, and *just hatred* of sin.

And yet one would think that a man needed no other cure for this temper, than this one reflection :

That if this had been the *spirit* of the son of God, if he had hated sin in *this manner*, there had been no redemption of the world : that if God had hated sinners in this manner, the world itself had ceased long ago.

This therefore we may take for a certain rule, that the more we partake of the divine nature, and the higher our sense of virtue is, the more we shall compassionate those that want it. The sight of such people will then, instead of raising in us a haughty con-



tempt, or peevish indignation towards them, fill us with such bowels of compassion, as when we see the miseries of an hospital.

That the follies therefore, crimes, and ill behaviour of our fellow creatures, may not lessen that love and tenderness which we are to have for all mankind, we should often consider the reasons on which this duty of love is founded.

Now we are to love our neighbour, that is, all mankind, not because they are wise, holy, virtuous, or well behaved, for all mankind neither ever was, nor ever will be so ; therefore it is certain, that the reason of our being obliged to love them, cannot be founded in their virtue.

Again, if their goodness were the reason of our being obliged to love people, we should have no *rules* to proceed by ; because though some people's virtues or vices are very notorious, yet generally speaking, we are but very

poor judges of the virtue of other people.

*Thirdly*, We are sure that the virtue of persons, is not the reason of our being obliged to love them, because we are commanded to pay the highest instances of love to our greatest enemies ; we are to love and bless, and pray for those that most injuriously treat us. This therefore is a demonstration, that the merit of persons is not the reason on which obligation to love them is founded.

Let us farther consider what that love is which we owe to our neighbour ; it is to love him as ourselves, that is, to have all those sentiments towards him, which we have towards ourselves ; to wish him every thing that we may lawfully wish to ourselves ; to be glad of every good, and sorry for every evil that happens to him ; and to be ready to do him all such acts of kindness, as we are always ready to do ourselves.

This love therefore, you see, is nothing else but a love of benevolence ;

it requires nothing of us, but such good wishes, tender affections, and such acts of kindness, as we show to ourselves.

You will perhaps ask, if you are not to have a *particular esteem* and *reverence* for good men? It is answered, yes; but then, this *esteem* is very different from that love of *benevolence* which we owe to our neighbour.

The esteem which you have for a man of eminent piety, is no act of charity to him.

We do not love virtue, as any thing that wants our *good wishes*, but as something that is our proper good.

This distinction betwixt love of benevolence, and esteem or veneration, is very plain and obvious. And you may perhaps still better see the plainness and necessity of it by this following instance.

“No man is to have a *high esteem* or *honour* for his own accomplishments or behaviour; yet every man is to love himself, that is, to wish well to himself: therefore this distinction betwixt love

and esteem, is not only plain, but very necessary to be observed."

Again, if you think it hardly possible to dislike the actions of unreasonable men, and yet have a true love for them, consider this with relation to yourself.

It is very possible, I hope, for you not only to dislike, but to *detest* and *abhor* a great many of your own past actions. But do you lose any of those tender sentiments towards yourself, which you used to have? Do you then cease to wish well to yourself? Is not the love of yourself as strong then as at any other time?

Now what is thus possible with relation to ourselves, is in the same manner possible with relation to others: we may have the highest good wishes towards them, desiring for them every good that we desire for ourselves, and at the same time dislike their way of life.

To conclude, all that love which we may justly have for ourselves, we are in *strict justice* obliged to exercise towards all other men; and we offend against

the great law of our nature, when our tempers towards others are different from those which we have towards ourselves.

Now that *self-love* which is *just* and *reasonable*, keeps us constantly tender, compassionate, and *well-affected* towards ourselves. If therefore you do not feel these kind dispositions towards all other people, you may be assured, that you are not in that state of charity; which is the very life and soul of christian piety.

You know how it hurts you, to be the *jest* and *ridicule* of other people; how it grieves you to be *robbed* of your reputation, and *deprived* of the favourable opinion of your neighbours: if therefore you expose others to scorn and contempt in any degree; if it pleases you to see or hear of their *frailties* and *infirmities*; or if you are only *loth* to conceal their faults, you are so far from loving such people as yourself, that you may be justly supposed to have as much hatred for them, as you have love for yourself. For such tempers are as truly

the proper fruits of hatred, as the contrary tempers are the proper fruits of love.

And as it is a certain sign that you love yourself, because you are tender of every thing that concerns you ; so it is as certain a sign that you hate your neighbour, when you are pleased with any thing that hurts him.

Lest any one should think, that the deep impressions of religion and a future state are only made upon ignorant people of rude and weak minds, we will here consider two instances of men of the greatest repute for wisdom and knowledge in their times ; and that we may be sure of the matter of fact, we will take these two first examples out of the sacred records.

The first is that of Balaam, the most knowing man in the east, esteemed as much in Mesopotamia, as Trismegistus in Egypt, or Zoroaster in Persia ; that is, highly magnified, or rather indeed, perfectly adored by the senseless people of those times, as the idolizing address

of king Balak to him serves to demonstrate.\* “I wot,” said he to Balaam, “That he whom thou blesseth is blessed; and that he whom thou curseth is cursed.”

Yet this famous conjurer, who wanted no inclination to comply with the demands of the king and princes of Midian, was forced to bless the people of God, whom he was called to curse; and to own that religion which he was hired to defy: and though he was sure that he should disoblige and affront the king and his princes by what he said, and lose the honours and riches which they offered, and he coveted; yet in the presence of them all, he took up his parable, and said, “Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram out of the mountains of the East, saying curse me Jacob, and come defy Israel. How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defyed? For from the top of the rocks

I see him. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and my last end be like his." As much as to say, religion is the wisdom and happiness of men : These men have the true religion, and the true God is on their side : and it is beyond the power of men or devils to make them miserable, whilst they maintain their integrity.

The second instance is that of the most knowing man in the world,\* Solomon, to whom " God gave wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East country, and all the wisdom of Egypt ; for he was wiser than all men : than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chacol, and Darda the son of Mahol ; and his fame was in all nations round about, he spake three thousand pro-

\* 1 Kings iv. 29, &c.



verbs, and his songs were a thousand and five ; and of the trees, from the cedar trees that are in Lebanon, even to hyssop that springeth out of the wall ; he spake also of fowls, of beasts, of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth which had heard of his wisdom.”

This prince being the most experienced for enquiry, the most wise for contrivance, the most wealthy for compassing in all the satisfaction that can be had in the things of the world, after many sifting, for he tells us in his book of Ecclesiastes, which is his book of repentance, chap. ii. ver. 1. “ I said in my heart, go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure ; ” therefore chap. i. ver. 27. “ I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly,” what there was in learning, holiness, pleasure, peace, plenty, magnificent entertainments, foreign supplies, royal visits, noble confederacies,

variety and abundance of sumptuous provisions and delicate diet, stately edifices, and rich vineyards, orchards, fishponds, and woods, numerous attendance, vast treasures, of which he had the most free, undisturbed, and unabated enjoyment; for he saith, “he withheld\* not his heart from any joy;” after several years, not only sensual but critical fruition, to find out as he saith, “that good which God hath given men under the sun;” after he had even tortured nature to extract the most exquisite spirits, and quintessence, which the varieties of the creature, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life afford;” at last pronounced them all vanity and vexation of spirit, and leaves this instruction behind, for late posterities.

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.† For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.” O my reader! is it

\* Kings iv. 9, 10.

† Eccles. xii. 13, 14.

not cheaper believing this, than to lose a brave life, wherein a man cannot err twice in the sad trial ; and at last with tears and groans own this conclusion ?

Let us come now to such other records as we have next the scripture ; waving the uncertain Cabala, and the fabulous Talmud of the Jews, who bring all men seriously to confess at last, that it had been their interest to be good at first ; in the famous words of the author of the book of wisdom, who represents them recanting thus,\*  
 “ We fools counted their life madness, and their end to be without honour ; how are they numbered among the children of God, and the lot is among the Saints ? We wearied ourselves in the ways of wickedness and destruction. What hath pride profited us ? Or, what good hath riches with our vaunting brought us ?

All these are past away as the shadow, and as a post that hasteth by : but the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God. In the sight of the universe they

\* Wisd. v. 4, 5, 6, 7.

seem to die, and their departure is taken, for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction: but they are in peace. For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality; and having been a little chastised, they are greatly rewarded; for God proved them, and found them worthy of himself."

And now, I cannot but entreat my reader to do what becomes every prudent person in a concern of this importance; that is, to retire a while, and to apply the aforesaid considerations to his own particular case; and to say, by way of scrutiny within himself, how have I lived? have I embraced or slighted the laws of religion? Are my ways and dispositions pious or impious? Am I in a blessed or in a cursed state? How little time have I to live, and how soon will my case be remediless?

And to make these impressions the more lively and lasting; place yourself in your meditations, as the providence of God will soon place you, that

is, on your death-bed. Look on yourself as just parting with all things that your eyes ever yet saw, and going before the judgment-seat of a holy and all-knowing God : and now tell me, what you think of religion and prophaneness ? Is it wisdom or madness to part with the favour and kingdom of God for the unlawful gains and pleasures of this perishing world ?

Consider then, there is an absolute necessity of being good and holy : all that ever lived or shall live otherwise, are and will be utterly undone forever : and all are convinced sooner or later. Never did any one suppress the sense of his duty to enjoy his pleasures, but at length the sense of his guilt embittered the taste of his pleasures.

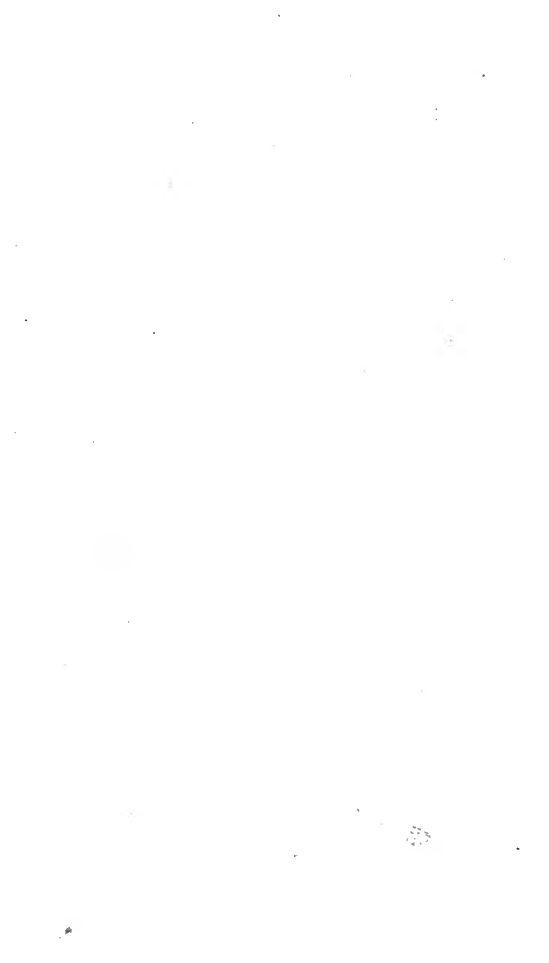
Read all the lives of men and women that are upon record, and go to the death-beds of such as see themselves approaching to another world. Listen to their words, when the physician tells them there is nothing in view but a speedy separation of soul and body ;

and when the minister reminds them, that nothing can now comfort them but the evidences of a\* “new birth, being begotten again unto a lively hope.” Here the faithful christian has ground to say†, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.‡ I desire to depart, and to be with Christ; who is my life, my hope, and my portion for ever.” And in this season, in which nature itself fails; some cry out as one I once knew, I feel such joy as I cannot express.”

\* 1 Pet. i. 3.    † 2. Tim. iv. 7. 8.    ‡ Phil. i. 23.

\* \* \* From the information the Editor has obtained, since this work went to press, he receives the Rev. WOODWARD, as the author of this valuable work.





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